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ABSTRACT

This collection contains 88 papers or summaries presented at a 1999 conference on self-study and institutional improvement for institutions of higher education. Papers are grouped into these chapters (with sample topics in parentheses): (1) "Quality Improvement Programs and Their Connection to the Accreditation Process" (self-study; accreditation); (2) "Connecting the Disconnects: Technology and Distance Education" (distance education delivery systems; Web-based and computer technology); (3) "Connecting the Disconnects: International Education" (networks; international education); (4) "Connecting with Other Institutions and Industry" (collaboration; credit transfer); (5) "Connecting the Disconnects: Faculty Development/Changing Roles of Faculty" (mentoring; professional development); (6) "Institutional Integrity" (faculty cultural diversity; online partnerships); (7) "General Education" (general education models and curricula); (8) "Assessment of Student Academic Achievement" (student evaluation); (9) "Program Review" (program evaluation); (10) "Special Challenges: Making Connections in Special Institutional Contexts" (governance; educational change); (11) "Coordinating the Self-Study Process" (accreditation; institutional assessment); (12) "Self-Study and Evaluation: Practical Advice" (evaluation methods); (13) "Preparing for a Focused Visit" (site visits); and (14) "Seeking Initial Affiliation through Initial Accreditation" (preparing for accreditation). Most papers contain references. (SLD)

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NCA

A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement

1999

CONNECTING
THE DISCONNECTS

Prepared for the program of the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
at the 104th Annual Meeting of the
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
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North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

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The papers included in this collection offer the viewpoints of their authors. The Commission highly recommends them for study and for the advice they contain, but none represent official Commission directions, rules, or policies.

Susan E. Van Kollenburg, Editor

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Foreword

Thanks to good advice from our Annual Meeting Program Committee, we chose a theme that obviously resonated with many people and institutions. "Connecting the Disconnects" brought in a wonderful variety of proposals from which to select the meeting presenters; it also appears to have stimulated some of the most useful and thought-provoking papers we have ever had the good fortune to print in these Annual Meeting *Collection of Papers*.

We start this *Collection* with papers that point toward the future: the linking of accreditation with continuous quality improvement endeavors on our campuses. On the eve of this meeting we will announce a three-year project to develop an alternative accreditation model based on quality improvement principles. If we had only the papers in this collection as a beginning point, we would be off to a good start. Providing strong bookends, we conclude the central section of the papers with very strong essays on assessment of student academic achievement. The decade-long assessment initiative has resulted in some excellent case studies that show the potential of assessment when it actually becomes imbedded in the academic culture of an institution. We learn as well that connecting assessment with program review has been useful to some institutions. As we embark on the exploration of quality improvement, we strive to bring assessment of student academic achievement to maturity in more of our institutions.

Between those bookends, we have the opportunity to learn from institutions busy with connecting potential or real disconnects. Technology changes how our students learn and how our faculties facilitate that learning, allowing us to provide high quality learning environments to campus-based students and the growing numbers of students who learn at a distance. As the borders of the campus dissolve, so also do state, regional, and national boundaries. A new set of connections must be made when we function in global settings. Wherever education moves, new partners share in its definition and delivery, calling for reconfiguring connections with our secondary schools and technical institutions or for the development of connections with business and industry.

Inevitably these exercises of making connection call on all of us to exercise caution that new disconnects do not endanger the enterprise. The faculty experience all of this transformation in very unique ways as they strive to fulfill their historic role of oversight of the academic program even as the academic program changes in structure and delivery. Change brings forth new challenges for assuring institutional integrity and, therefore, for new connections. Perhaps the central role of general education in higher education represents one of the largest potential disconnects, although several papers provide very thoughtful examples of how faculties strive to maintain that foundational connection.

No *Collection of Papers* would be complete without presentations on unique institutional challenges. Here we learn about single purpose institutions, programs of professional preparation, and multi-campus institutions. Moreover, for all of our institutions preparing for comprehensive or focused visits, this *Collection* contains some of the best theoretical and practical advice available to them. Self-study coordinators, steering committees, and all other stakeholders in effective institutional self-study find in these pages support, encouragement, assistance, and the strongest possible evidence that the whole process has the potential to strengthen institutions and the quality of education they provide to students.

This 1999 Annual Meeting will have a long life because of these papers. I expect that several years from now people who attend the meeting will rediscover its impact through these pages while other who missed it will sense its vitality and diversity. The Commission is grateful for the quality of this *Collection*.

Steven D. Crow
Executive Director

April 10, 1999

Preface

On behalf of the Commission, I am pleased to present the fifteenth edition of the *Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement.* The theme of the 1999 Annual Meeting, "Connecting the Disconnects," is woven through many of the papers, particularly those in the chapters on quality improvement programs, technology/distance education, international education, connections with other institutions and industry, and the role of faculty. Other chapters focus on topics related to the Criteria for Accreditation and institutional improvement, including institutional integrity, general education, and program review. In recent years, the *Collection* has served as a valuable resource on institutional efforts to assess student academic achievement. This year's edition attests to the progress that institutions have made in the ten years of the Commission's assessment initiative. For those involved in self-study, the *Collection of Papers* goes beyond the policies and procedures provided in the *Handbook of Accreditation,* to give advice based on actual experience.

The purpose of these papers is to supplement the oral presentations at the Annual Meeting. It is our hope in providing them that they will enhance the learning experience for those attending the Meeting. We are grateful to the speakers for their willingness to share their experiences with others through this volume, in addition to their presentations at the Annual Meeting.

The Commission invites your comments about the *Collection of Papers* and welcomes your suggestions for future topics for the Annual Meeting program.

Susan E. Van Kollenburg
Editor
Associate Director of Programs, Publications,
and Member Services

April 10, 1999

12

Chapter 1

Quality Improvement Programs and Their Connection to the Accreditation Process

CONNECTING
THE DISCONNECTS

104th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
April 10-13, 1999 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

A Partnership Worth Pursuing? NCA Accreditation and the Malcolm Baldrige Award

Jerrilyn A. Brewer
David Trites
Ron Matuska
Jane Bishop

This paper will address the "disconnect" that often exists between the accreditation process and continuous quality improvement efforts in higher education by showing the "connections" that do exist between an accreditation self-study process, which is required as part of the NCA accreditation process, and a continuous quality improvement self-study process, which is required as part of the application process for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. The paper will also show the connections that exist between NCA's five Criteria and Baldrige's seven Categories. Additionally, the paper will highlight how a state-wide Institutional Effectiveness Model can be used as the basis for data gathering that is essential for both the Baldrige and the NCA self-study processes. Lastly, the paper will provide a concrete example of an institution that has used the Baldrige criteria as the foundation for creating its Student Assessment Plan. By showing how the Baldrige "results-oriented" focus parallels NCA's requirement that institutions document student academic achievement, the paper connects accreditation and performance results. Both accreditation and Baldrige are acknowledged to be significant accomplishments. By analyzing documents, comparing the two processes, and relating them operationally through modeled examples, institutions of higher education can determine the value of using Baldrige to simultaneously achieve the goals of accreditation and quality improvement.

Comparison of Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and NCA Accreditation Process

☐ Background

American higher education is typically controlled at the institutional level with its roots founded in self-regulation. The objective of most postsecondary institutions is to be identified as meeting a level of quality recognized by the public, students, and other institutions. It traditionally has been this basis upon which an institution seeks judgment to achieve an accredited status. The literature, however, suggests that more may be expected from the accreditation process. The viewpoint of gained prestige was dominant, especially during accreditation's earlier years. During the early years of the North Central Association (Geiger, 1970), accreditation automatically accorded an institution a prestigious image. In recent years, criticisms by groups and individuals outside of education have forced accreditation officials to become reactionary in response to critics (Simmons, Thompson, and Wolff, 1993). Public expectation has become more accountability-driven and outcome focused. Higher education is now expected to answer the difficult questions of how to become more efficient and effective. In addition, the quality movement led by Deming and others is redefining the way organizations manage people and processes. This movement has spread from private enterprise to higher education, resulting in new and innovative approaches to the operation of educational institutions.

☐ Higher education accreditation and the Baldrige Award

The principles of higher education accreditation and those of the Baldrige Award provide an interesting framework to study and compare. The literature supports the premise that the five NCA criteria are essential elements historically refined to represent a measurement of quality in higher education institutions (Albrecht, 1989, Ewell, 1993, Faughn & Hammonds, 1993, and Geiger, 1970). Similar documentation exists supporting the seven Baldrige categories as measurements of quality in business and industry (Bogan & Hart, 1992, George, 1992, and Seymour, 1994). One question pursuant to this writing is: What evidence exists within documents of the North Central Association and those of the Baldrige Award that show a defined relationship? In other words, does the process of seeking accreditation parallel that of seeking the Baldrige Award?

Recognition by NCA is driven by how effectively each institution depicts itself in its own continuous improvement environment. Similarly, Total Quality Management has become the American business and industry impetus toward achieving quality in service, products, and delivery. Higher education is under intense scrutiny to conduct similar activities. Within the overall umbrella of TQM, the Baldrige Award is viewed as the ultimate recognition an American organization can achieve (Cole, 1992, Marchese, 1993, Steeples, 1993, and George & Wiemerskirch, 1994).

☐ Criticisms of accreditation

Throughout its history, accreditation has undergone scrutiny by internal and external forces. Many critics have questioned the integrity of a system that allows institutions to be measured by their own purposes and mission (Wolff, 1993). Kaplan (1989) also comments about accreditation's lost credibility, finding it difficult to believe that a group of strangers who visit the institution once every ten years for three days can determine the extent and existence of institutional quality. Institutional quality in itself is difficult to define. Kaplan suggests that accreditation can do little more than determine if an institution is meeting its own goals and objectives. Two-year colleges, especially, seem to be most vulnerable to these criticisms since they do not have the influence of size and long histories as do many of the well-established four-year colleges and universities (Daniel, 1992). Kaplan proposes that regional accrediting associations and chief executive officers develop a pilot project to partner in the identification and improvement of institutional quality.

☐ Criticisms of Total Quality Management and Baldrige

Total Quality Management, like accreditation, also has its critics. Surveys conducted by Arthur D. Little, A.T. Kearney, Ernst and Young, McKinsey and Company, and Rath and Strong have produced information that demonstrates TQM has failed to produce results (Marchese, 1993). Most of the criticism centers on implementation rather than philosophy. Problems cited include: lack of leadership, middle management muddle, misunderstanding of participation, obsession with process, and failure to include the customer. These reports conclude that most problems with the inadequacies of TQM result from failures to develop a strategic plan tied to a long-term business plan.

Seymour (1994) writes that higher education has been conditioned to believe that quality is a function of resources. He states, "Accrediting agencies have relied almost exclusively on input measures–the number of books in the library, the number of Ph.D.'s on the faculty, student selectivity, and faculty resources" (p. 16). He cites the *U. S. News & World Report*, ("America's Best Colleges"), which uses only resource-driven criteria as the measurement of quality. He is critical of the accreditation process, suggesting that it is too narrowly focused on a particular part of the institution and "cycles" every five years or more. This, in his opinion, renders the continuous improvement concept ineffective since TQM is an ongoing process.

Marchese (1993) states that TQM has spread rapidly from health care organizations to education. His concern is that, since its arrival in the 1980s to virtually every campus in 1991-92, TQM is often misunderstood as another passing fad. "Total Quality is complicated, important, difficult to implement, and far from figured out. Contrary to the tool-driven, seven-step workshops that consultants are busily selling, we're years away from knowing what academic versions of TQM will appropriately look like" (p. 11).

The Baldrige Award also has its share of skeptics. Critics focus on the high costs of competing in a contest-like atmosphere and suggest that "gaming skills" are a prevalent factor in winning. They also draw attention to the practice of some companies who hire Baldrige experts to guide the process. Some senior executives are said to use these reasons as an excuse to avoid the process and fail to see the positive aspects of using the criteria to help their companies exclusive of competition (George, 1992).

☐ The Quality Movement in education

Many educational institutions have incorporated the Total Quality Management movement as a tool in the planning and continuous development of the institution. They have borrowed from industry the ideas of continuous quality improvement (Schilling & Schilling, 1993). Mission statements and visions of the future can be developed through TQM that correspond with the needs of a self-study analysis.

Masters and Leiker (1992) have drawn a correlation between Deming's management theories and how they relate to the management of institutions of higher education. They state that Deming's management methods can fit into any organization if profound knowledge is acquired and proper implementation occurs. Profound knowledge involves understanding the processes within an organization, their capabilities, the theories behind knowledge, and the psychology used to understand the people in an organization.

Holloway (1994) presents a British view of Total Quality Management in education. He writes, "All stock holders stand to gain from an evaluation of the concepts and practices of TQM in a higher education context" (p.107). Holloway's viewpoint is that TQM is appealing to higher education today because of competition for students and pressure from external stakeholders–employers, government–who are looking for systematic ways to improve quality. Holloway speculates, "No distinction has yet been made between the intrinsic quality of students' learning experiences, quality of 'educational products' (course curricula, physical teaching materials), and the broad field of quality of service" (p.110).

☐ Background of the Baldrige Award

The Malcolm Baldrige Award, as established by an act of Congress in 1987, was designed to recognize quality achievements in three categories of companies: manufacturing, service, and small business. The award is intended first to increase the awareness of quality and quality management as a critical strategic issue in U.S. competitiveness. Secondly, it was created to develop and promote an understanding of the requirements for excellent quality management systems (Cole, 1995). Deming's 14 principles of management and the Deming Prize, created by the Union of Japanese Science and Engineering (Deming, 1982) as a national award, provide the basis for this award.

Since the beginning of the Baldrige Award program, educators have been involved by serving on the Award's board of examiners. Award recipients have also been involved with various educational organizations. State award programs modeling the Baldrige Award have also included education categories. In 1995, Baldrige Pilot Programs were conducted in education. These programs were conducted strictly for learning; no awards were presented. Based on the overall success of the Pilot programs at the national and state levels new 1998 Education Criteria have been written. The 1998 education criteria for performance excellence include seven major categories: leadership; strategic planning; student and stakeholder focus; information and analysis; faculty and staff focus; educational and support process management; school performance results. (*Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award,* 1998).

☐ The Baldrige Award process

Organizations wishing to apply for the Baldrige Award first complete and submit a detailed application that addresses each component of seven categories. The application must respond to approximately 90 "areas to address" organized into about 30 items in the seven major categories (Cole, 1995).

The next step is a review of the application conducted by a panel of four to eight members who are quality experts selected from business, professional and trade organizations, accrediting bodies, universities, and government. The evaluation of the items is based on three dimensions: the company's approach to the issues in the item; the extent to which the approach is fully and appropriately deployed within the organization; and the results that have been achieved. The examiners must make judgments about their importance based on the item and the characteristics of the company being scored. This first stage review determines those applications that should be referred for consensus review.

The second review is then conducted by a new group of examiners consisting of five members and a senior examiner group leader. It is this review that determines those applicants that will receive a site visit. The site review is conducted by at least five members of the board with one senior examiner. The visit consists of views of facilities, reviews of records and data files, and interviews. The primary purpose of the site visit is to clarify and verify the content of the company's written application. Findings are reported to a panel of judges who make the final recommendations on those applicants who should receive awards. The National Institute of Standards and Technology receives these recommendations and presents them to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, who makes the final decision.

☐ Accreditation in comparison

In similar fashion, a higher education institution's decision to affiliate with an accrediting agency has primarily remained voluntary. Seeking accreditation requires that an institution first apply to the Commission for approval to proceed by completing a Preliminary Information Form (PIF). Once the approval is granted, the institution must submit a report, which establishes that it meets the General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) as prescribed by the Commission. After acceptance of the GIR report by the Commission, the institution is given direction to proceed with a self-study (*Handbook of Accreditation,* 1994-1996). The self-study is often a long, tedious process which, in many ways, parallels the Baldrige application. Both Baldrige and NCA processes are done in preparation for a visit from a team of peers selected to evaluate the institution/business and make recommendations of the worthiness in becoming an affiliated member of the North Central Association or, in the case of Baldrige, receive an award of recognition.

Further analysis reveals that most practices of Baldrige and NCA are quite compatable and similar in nature. While Baldrige may seem to be more results driven, the impact of NCA's assessment requirement has proven to be a results focused model. The primary difference still remains that Baldrige's focus is to receive recognition through an award, while NCA's focus is achievement of recognition as an equal in the higher education arena.

State-Wide Institutional Effectiveness Model

In 1992, the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) hired consultants from the Community College Consortium of the University of Michigan to develop a customized institutional effectiveness model for the Wisconsin Technical colleges. The main purpose was to provide the WTCS with a valid and consistent means of assessing individual college and system performance. The model was based on existing assessment efforts and was designed to be modified by the individual colleges.

The Institutional Effectiveness Model uses core indicators that can assess student achievement and the overall institution's performance, and can respond to external accountability demands, North Central Association accreditation requirements, and federal and state reporting requirements.

Seventeen core indicators of effectiveness were identified. The indicators were developed through a process involving multiple groups and a variety of information sources to identify measures that best describe college effectiveness. Discussions continue within and among groups of stakeholders–students, employers, faculty, support staff, administrators, legislators and the public. The value of the effectiveness model and core indicators relies heavily on how they are applied.

The seventeen core indicators can be classified into four major emphases: student achievement and satisfaction; employer satisfaction; organizational quality; and public perception and satisfaction.

☐ Description of the WTCS Core Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness

- ○ Core Indicator #1 assesses the identification of student needs, goals, and interests. It is the measure of the educational needs, goals, and interests of an identified entering student cohort.
- ○ Core Indicator #2 gauges the identification of student functional skills at entry. This is the measure describing functional skills in reading, mathematics, written and oral communication, and technical fields.
- ○ Core Indicator #3 measures course completion. It reflects the number of students who officially enroll and successfully complete courses.
- ○ Core Indicator #4 assesses student grades. It is a measure of the grade distribution and GPA achieved by students for all courses in which they are officially enrolled, as reported at the end of the term. This statistic can be cumulative (reported as a cumulative GPA for all courses taken since initial enrollment), and it can be aggregated for students in courses, programs, and the college.
- ○ Core Indicator #5 gauges student satisfaction with courses, programs, and services. It measures whether students' needs and expectations have been met or exceeded.
- ○ Core Indicator #6 evaluates student retention/withdrawal rates. It is a measure of a student cohort entering a technical college in a multi-semester program that is still enrolled for at least one credit the following term.
- ○ Core Indicator #7 measures student completion and graduation rates. It reflects whether an identified cohort entering a technical college officially enrolled in a program completes a degree or certificate.
- ○ Core Indicator #8 measures student achievement of educational goal(s). It reflects whether students who upon leaving technical college report that their original goal in attending has been met.

- ○ Core Indicator #9 assesses student knowledge and skills at exit. It reflects the knowledge and skills achieved by students at the time of exit from college in the areas of reading, mathematics, written and oral communication, general education, and applied technology.
- ○ Core Indicator #10 records pass rates/scores of licensure exams. It reflects the number of students achieving a passing score on a certification or licensure exam.
- ○ Core Indicator #11 evaluates placement rates/employment success. It reflects an identified student cohort entering a technical college achieving a "marketable skill" that obtains employment in a directly related field within one year of last attendance.
- ○ Core Indicator #12 measures employer satisfaction with graduates' work skills/performance. It reflects the degree to which regional employers in a given field indicate that their employees who received training from a technical college exhibit superior skills and job performance.
- ○ Core Indicator #13 evaluates achievement of institutional goals and standards. It reflects the extent to which internal and external customers indicate that the stated goals, objectives, and standards for programs and services have been achieved.
- ○ Core Indicator #14 assesses organizational climate. It reflects the extent to which college administrators, faculty, and staff indicate that their needs and expectations related to work are met or exceeded.
- ○ Core Indicator #15 evaluates articulation and linkages with external organizations. It reflects the number and types of collaborative activities that are carried out by a technical college with external organizations.
- ○ Core Indicator #16 measures identification of customer needs and expectations. It reflects the extent to which customer needs and expectations are identified by a technical college.
- ○ Core Indicator #17 gauges public satisfaction. It reflects the extent to which external customers are satisfied with a technical college's programs.

Since these core indicators provide a measure of effectiveness and accountability, they provide an avenue for documentation of how the college is performing. They can be used as patterns of evidence for the NCA Criteria, as well as measures for the Baldrige Criteria. Opportunities for improvement of quality can be identified and plans for improvement can be developed. Ongoing evaluation of initiatives with measurement of improvement is achieved.

Table 1 depicts the relationship of the Institutional Effectiveness Core Indicators with the Baldrige Criteria. Table 2 represents the correlations between the Institutional Effectiveness Core Indicators and the five NCA Criteria. As illustrated, these Core Indicators provide excellent measures for both criteria.

Using Baldrige and NCA to Document Student Academic Achievement

Alexandria Technical College (ATC), a public technical college, is located in West-Central Minnesota 120 miles north of Minneapolis on Interstate 94. ATC was among the first technical colleges in the state to pursue NCA accreditation, receiving its first ten-year status in 1983. In 1994, ATC was selected as the first higher education provider to receive a site visit as part of the Baldrige Criteria-based Minnesota Quality Award process. In 1996 recognition for the college continued when it became the first college to receive the Gold award from the Minnesota Council for Quality.

At ATC the connections between the "customer driven Baldrige" and "mission driven NCA" improvement approaches are apparent in the college's assessment model. A central tenet of this model is the notion that current and potential employers of ATC graduates are the primary external customers. Ultimately, the success of the organization depends on meeting the expectations of these employers who hire graduates of the college. Most student customers at ATC continue to indicate the prevailing reason for their attendance is to gain skills to get jobs ("education for employment" is the essence of the college's mission). Therefore there is no disconnect between the central Baldrige requirement (exceed customer expectations) and the central NCA requirement (fulfilling college mission). In fact, employer expectations had to be carefully gathered and validated in order to meet both.

Systematic gathering of these critical employer expectations was done in 1994 and 1995. The Advisory Committee for each program major, during the fall 1994 advisory meeting, was asked to provide the group's consensus response to the question: "What do employers expect from ATC graduates?" These results were prioritized at the 1995 advisory meetings, confirmed by the growing body of educational improvement literature (such as the SCANS report), and by

Table 1

The Relationship of the Institutional Effectiveness Core Indicators with the Baldrige Criteria

Institutional Effectiveness Core Indicators	Baldrige Criteria						
	Leadership (1)	Strategic Planning (2)	Student & Stakeholder Focus (3)	Information & Analysis (4)	Faculty & Staff Focus (5)	Educational & Support Process (6)	School Performance Results (7)
Identification of Student Needs, Goals & Interests (1)		•	•			•	
Identification of Student Functional Skills at Entry (2)		•	•			•	
Course Completion (3)		•		•		•	
Student Grades (4)		•	•	•		•	
Student Satisfaction with Courses, Programs & Services (5)			•		•	•	•
Student Retention / Withdrawal Rates (6)			•		•	•	•
Student Completion & Graduation Rates (7)			•	•	•	•	•
Student Achievement of Educational Goals (8)		•	•	•	•		•
Student Knowledge & Skills at Exit (9)		•	•	•	•		•
Pass Rates / Scores on Licensure Exams (10)			•	•	•		•
Placement Rates / Employment Success (11)			•	•			•
Employer Satisfaction with Graduates' Work Skills / Performance (12)		•	•	•		•	•
Achievement of Institutional Goals & Standards (13)	•	•	•				•
Organizational Climate (14)	•		•		•		•
Articulation & Linkages with External Organizations (15)	•		•			•	•
Identification of Customer Needs & Expectations (16)	•	•	•			•	•
Public Satisfaction (17)	•		•				•

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Table 1

The Relationship of the Institutional Effectiveness Core Indicators with the NCA Criteria for Accreditation

	NCA Criteria for Accreditation				
Institutional Effectiveness Core Indicators	**CRITERION 1** Mission	**CRITERION 2** Systems	**CRITERION 3** Assessment	**CRITERION 4** Planning	**CRITERION 5** Integrity
Identification of Student Needs, Goals & Interests (1)			●		
Identification of Student Functional Skills at Entry (2)			●		
Course Completion (3)			●		
Student Grades (4)			●		
Student Satisfaction with Courses, Programs & Services (5)		●	●	●	
Student Retention / Withdrawal Rates (6)			●		
Student Completion & Graduation Rates (7)			●	●	
Student Achievement of Educational Goals (8)			●		
Student Knowledge & Skills at Exit (9)			●	●	
Pass Rates / Scores on Licensure Exams (10)			●		
Placement Rates / Employment Success (11)			●	●	
Employer Satisfaction with Graduates' Work Skills / Performance (12)			●	●	●
Achievement of Institutional Goals & Standards (13)	●	●		●	●
Organizational Climate (14)	●	●		●	
Articulation & Linkages with External Organizations (15)		●	●	●	
Identification of Customer Needs & Expectations (16)	●		●	●	●
Public Satisfaction (17)	●	●	●		

follow-up surveys of additional employers. The resulting collection of customer expectations is believed to represent the essential outcomes of learning at Alexandria Technical College. All program majors completed course outcomes in 1996 but these were not directly linked across the college with either customer expectations or required courses in each program. The current Assessment Model provides this linkage by requiring that every course learning outcome (minimum of one per credit) contributes to learning that will meet customer expectations in either the General Education Learning outcomes category or the Program Learning outcomes category. Consequently, all course syllabi have been or are being revised to provide outcomes that will document alignment of course outcomes with both the general education learning outcomes and the program learning outcomes that make up the customer expectations.

In this way the college has connected the improvement approaches of NCA and Baldrige by addressing the central tenets of each approach. The process results in integrated and seamless learning experiences in all program majors that address both technical and general learning outcomes required by the college's mission and the employer customers' expectations.

Conclusion

Higher education institutions must face the fact that accreditation and continuous quality improvement efforts are not going to disappear. Both of these accountability measures offer positive approaches that institutions can use to document their effectiveness and efficiency. If higher education takes seriously this call to self-assess, using the Baldrige and NCA together may afford educational institutions an opportunity to meet accreditation requirements by using a systematic approach to data collection and analysis–the heart of the Baldrige process. Is NCA accreditation and the Malcolm Baldrige Award a "partnership worth pursuing?" It might just be.

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Use of the Baldrige Criteria for an Accreditation Self-Study

Bill Feddersen

Background and History

Judith Eaton, in the January 1999 *CHEA Chronicle,* writes that, in accreditation, "Quality is Job 1." Using this slogan, borrowed from Ford, Eaton reminds us that quality is a message about results, a message that traditional accreditation does not deliver. The application of the Baldrige framework modifies the traditional accreditation approach by using a systems framework to link quality and outcomes. This non-traditional approach to conducting a self-study can be most useful to any college interested in strengthening its commitment to measuring and improving results, but it is most beneficial to colleges that already have experience applying the principles of continuous quality improvement.

Mt. San Antonio College, a large Southern California community college district with an enrollment of 22,500 FTE students, has been applying quality improvement principles for seven years. We started in 1991-92 with a year of exploration and learning about successful applications in other settings. That was followed by a year of visitations and training prior to the selection of pilot process improvement teams. A Quality Steering Team developed a Quality Improvement Master Plan and quality training model that has been followed for the past five years. Also, during the same seven year time frame, the campus began the implementation of a new shared governance system in compliance with a new law requiring strengthened and meaningful participation of faculty, administrators, support staff, and students in campus planning, policy development, and decision-making. The shared governance model is consistent with the philosophy of quality improvement. Both emphasize shared leadership, shared decision-making, and working collaboratively in cross-functional teams, and everyone's responsibility for creating a quality learning environment. For the past seven years, Quality has been "Job 1" at Mt. San Antonio College. The questions we began to ask ourselves in 1995-96 were, "How are we doing? What is the best way to assess our various quality improvement initiatives?"

Rationale for Conducting a Baldrige Self-Study

In 1995, the first National Baldrige Education Pilot Criteria for Education and Health Care was published. Those criteria, revised in 1998, provide a powerful and proven systems framework for assessment and institutional improvement. They were the perfect framework to place over the entire institution to give us greater insight into how all the pieces fit and how we could move to higher levels of performance.

In 1997-98, the College was scheduled to conduct a comprehensive, traditional self-study for reaffirmation of accreditation. While the traditional self-study is a good methodology for measuring the College against established standards, its emphasis is more on quality assurance than quality improvement. A quality improvement emphasis, like the Baldrige model, was more meaningful to us. Fortunately, the Western Association was beginning to encourage special self-studies, so we applied and were given permission to use the Baldrige Criteria as the framework for our self-study. We also had to incorporate Accreditation Standards with Baldrige Quality Criteria. Mt. San Antonio College was only the second Western Association community college to conduct an alternative self-study and the first to use the Baldrige Criteria for a self-study.

In addition to using the Baldrige as an assessment and improvement strategy, we also believed it would be a wonderful learning opportunity. We knew we would fall short of Baldrige's high standards, especially in terms of measurable results. As educators, our culture is comfortable with the input focus, with describing *what* we do, and always in terms of stand-alone programs, functions, and services. We really aren't very good at using a systems approach, discussing *how* we do something, or measuring results. Baldrige could help us learn these skills.

Organization of the Self-Study

The College organized the self-study around seven special self-study teams, corresponding to the Baldrige Criteria for Leadership, Strategic Planning, Information and Analysis, Student and Stakeholder Focus, Human Resources, *Educational Process Management, and Business Process Management. There was no team for Baldrige Criterion 7.0–* Performance Results. All teams had to contribute to results, the last chapter in the self-study. The co-chairs of each team composed the Self-Study Steering Committee. The composition of the Accreditation Team was designed to meet three main criteria: (1) use the skills of staff with quality training; (2) provide opportunities for broad participation of faculty, management, staff, and students, and; (3) capitalize on the strengths of staff with previous accreditation experience. Approximately 75 faculty and staff were directly involved.

Shortly after beginning the implementation of quality initiatives, the College identified critical systems and critical processes that provide the framework for the operation of the College. These systems and processes have also formed the basis of the College's use of process improvement and cross-functional teams to drive continuous improvement. The chart on the following page represents the alignment of Baldrige Criteria and the College's Critical Systems and Processes. Note that 3.0 Student and Stakeholder Focus drives critical systems and processes to produce 7.0 Performance Results. At the heart of the Baldrige process and approach are how customer and critical processes are defined, how key customer requirements are determined, how key measurement indicators and goals are set, and how performance is monitored.

The training, guidance, and critique we received from a Baldrige trained consultant were invaluable throughout our special self-study process. Although we had considerable experience with quality improvement tools and were familiar with the Baldrige criteria, we possessed no in-depth knowledge of the Baldrige framework or how to apply it. Our consultant, Dr. Daniel Seymour, a Baldrige senior examiner who has written extensively on the subject, provided critical team training, served as a member of the Steering Committee, and was available to teams throughout the process.

What We Learned

Many lessons were learned. A new complex process that you don't fully understand can be difficult and even frustrating as you learn by doing. Certainly that was the case as seventy-five of us tried to learn and stay on the same page while also doing our full-time jobs. Combining Accreditation Standards (10 standards and 116 items) with Baldrige Criteria (7 criteria and 21 items) was much more difficult than anyone envisioned. Here is a summary of our key learnings:

◇ **We learned the value of applying a systems perspective.** Accreditation standards are independent variables. Each one stands on its own. The Baldrige asks a set of common and related questions that form a thread that is woven through all criteria. It forces connections and integration and emphasizes how everything contributes to results. By probing deeply, asking many "how" questions, we were led to ask "why." By forcing us to explain things, certain truths were revealed.

◇ **We learned the critical role played by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).** We had not clearly identified KPIs, and didn't fully understand them or how they linked operations to results and improvements. Now we can see how performance indicators relate to trends, benchmarking, planning, and goal setting.

◇ **We learned that measurement and benchmarking are the drivers of change and continuous improvement.** Our Baldrige Self-Study pinpointed our lack of metrics and outcome information. We learned that if you can't measure it, you can't understand it, and if you can't understand it, you can't improve it. We also learned that we were not very sophisticated about benchmarks and benchmarking.

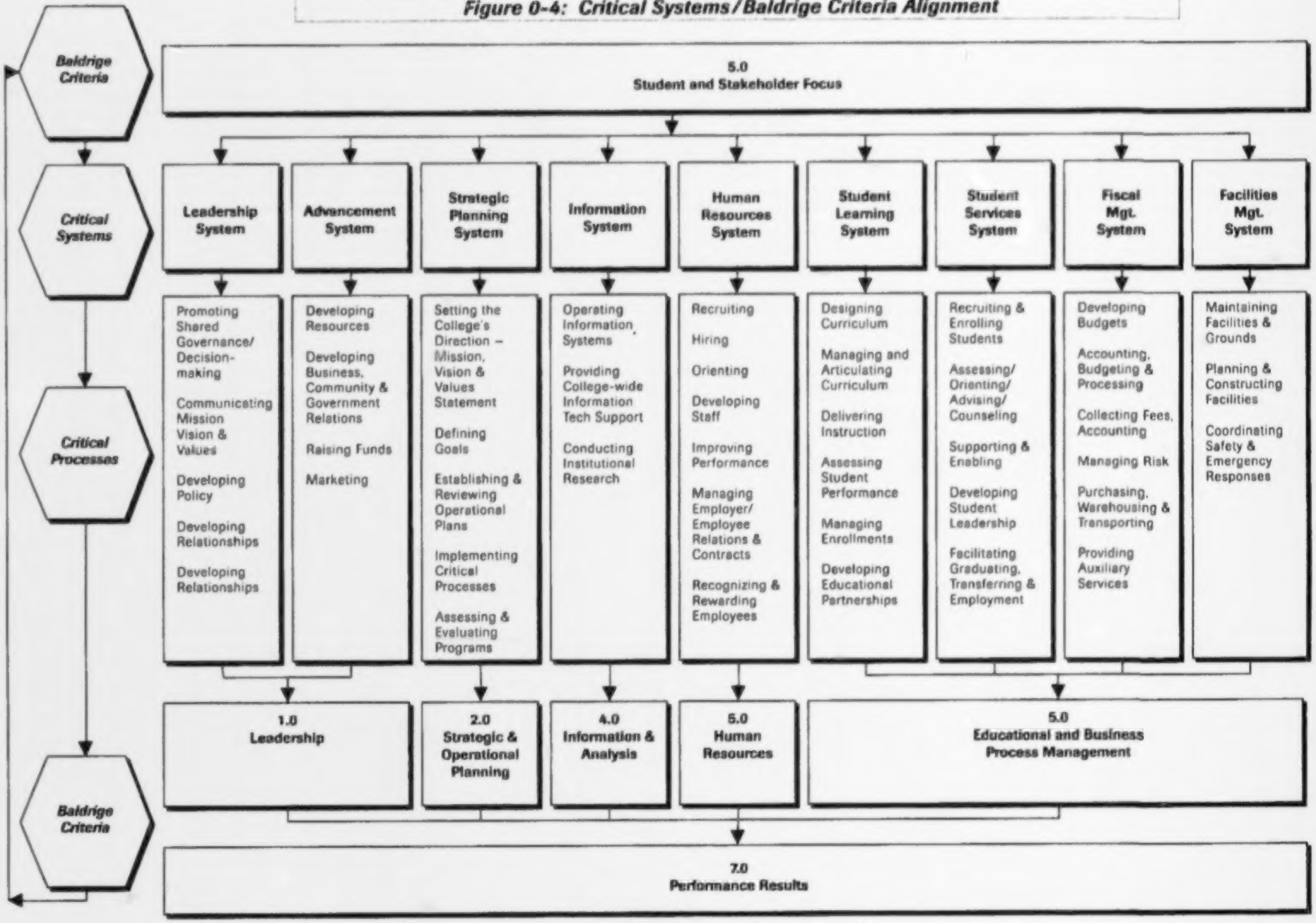
◇ **We learned the importance of leadership system.** While this may seem like an obvious finding, in many institutions leadership is narrowly defined and often misunderstood. The Baldrige framework taught us to look at shared leadership as a system and how it connects to and drives other parts of a larger system.

◇ **We learned the importance of training.** Using the Baldrige criteria to assess where an institution is and to drive performance improvement will not happen unless most staff really understand systems thinking. In

Mt. San Antonio College

Walnut, California

Figure 0-4: Critical Systems / Baldrige Criteria Alignment


Baldrige Criteria
Critical Systems
Critical Processes
Baldrige Criteria
5.0 Student and Stakeholder Focus
Leadership System
Advancement System
Strategic Planning System
Information System
Human Resources System
Student Learning System
Student Services System
Fiscal Mgt. System
Facilities Mgt. System
Promoting Shared Governance/Decision-making
Communicating Mission Vision & Values
Developing Policy
Developing Relationships
Developing Relationships
Developing Resources
Developing Business, Community & Government Relations
Raising Funds
Marketing
Setting the College's Direction – Mission, Vision & Values Statement
Defining Goals
Establishing & Reviewing Operational Plans
Implementing Critical Processes
Assessing & Evaluating Programs
Operating Information Systems
Providing College-wide Information Tech Support
Conducting Institutional Research
Recruiting
Hiring
Orienting
Developing Staff
Improving Performance
Managing Employer/Employee Relations & Contracts
Recognizing & Rewarding Employees
Designing Curriculum
Managing and Articulating Curriculum
Delivering Instruction
Assessing Student Performance
Managing Enrollments
Developing Educational Partnerships
Recruiting & Enrolling Students
Assessing/Orienting/Advising/Counseling
Supporting & Enabling
Developing Student Leadership
Facilitating Graduating, Transferring & Employment
Developing Budgets
Accounting, Budgeting & Processing
Collecting Fees, Accounting
Managing Risk
Purchasing, Warehousing & Transporting
Providing Auxiliary Services
Maintaining Facilities & Grounds
Planning & Constructing Facilities
Coordinating Safety & Emergency Responses
1.0 Leadership
2.0 Strategic & Operational Planning
4.0 Information & Analysis
5.0 Human Resources
5.0 Educational and Business Process Management
7.0 Performance Results

ORGANIZATION OF SPECIAL SELF-STUDY

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conducting the Baldrige Self-Study we had to learn how to answer the many similar, but slightly different, "how" questions. We also had to learn how to ask the right questions if we were going to collect useful data.

◇ **We learned that the Baldrige seems to generate more gaps—more areas for fundamental improvement.** It's not just that the Baldrige raised a lot more questions with fewer items than accreditation; those probing questions appear to generate more fundamental concerns. They really showed us what was missing. For example, we looked at how we do planning and then linked that to results. Baldrige appears to probe deeper, to expose more of the disconnects in the institution. For instance, while accreditation asks whether a certain policy is in place, Baldrige asks how the policy was devised and how the institution evaluates the effectiveness of the policy on student learning.

◇ **We learned that integrating accreditation standards with Baldrige categories caused a considerable amount of additional work but did not increase the value of the self-study.** The Steering Committee was unanimous in this conclusion. Accreditation Standards and Baldrige Criteria are both methodologies to assess institutional effectiveness. But they go about it from different perspectives. In retrospect, combining two different assessment methodologies does not make sense. Since the Baldrige framework accomplishes the same purpose as accreditation standards, it should be done as a separate, alternative study. Accrediting bodies approving this alternative can ask the institution also to conduct a "check-list" assessment of accreditation standards to assure institutional compliance with the standards of good practice as established by the accrediting commission. At the same time, as more colleges use the Baldrige framework for a self-study accreditation, officials will learn how to focus more on outcomes and, over time, the two methodologies may be more similar than dissimilar.

Summary

Although the special Baldrige Self-Study was much more difficult and time consuming than a normal self-study, the value added made it more meaningful and worthwhile. As a result of this pioneering effort, Mt. San Antonio College is rethinking everything we do using the Baldrige Criteria and framework. The realignment of our core values and our governance structure with Baldrige's Core Values and structure are two examples of an unanticipated impact that occurred immediately after we completed the special self-study. For us, applying the Baldrige proved to be an excellent institutional assessment and improvement strategy.

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One Step to Creating the Learning Organization: The Learning Academy

Kate Noone
Jacqueline D. Taylor

Introduction and Background of Davenport College

At the same time that organizations frantically strive to regenerate and re-initiate strengthened ties to institutions of higher learning, faculty, staff, and students are often feeling more and more disconnected, or connected only through more loosely woven fabric. The boundaries of learning are becoming increasingly invisible as the billions of miles of fiber optic cable expand as rapidly as the nanosecond flies. We must create an institutional culture that spans those boundaries and rekindles a culture of spirited learners bonded by the love of teaching, learning, and understanding, even if they are geographically dispersed.

Davenport College is an independent, multi-campus, postsecondary institution with ten campuses and centers strategically located throughout western and northern Michigan and northern Indiana. Its history spans 132 years, with only five presidents, which demonstrates stable leadership at the top.

It's fourth President, Donald Maine, in his 20 years as CEO, exponentially expanded Davenport College through acquisition and enrollment, to become Davenport Educational System (DES), the largest independent college in Michigan. Its leadership right from its beginnings as a small private secretarial training institute fostered the entrepreneurial spirit. The College remains alive and well today through its concentration on business, allied health, and paralegal programs, all supported by an online Learning Network and a newly NCA-approved MBA program. While this makes it a more exciting "can-do" culture, it also often seems to reward autonomy, competition between campuses, and lack of team enterprises. Even with some of the dichotomies described, the college has managed to maintain a caring culture where individual employee well-being is a core ingredient, which, in turn, brings about a strong commitment for the institution and its students.

With this strength in leadership, geographical coverage, growth, and entrepreneurial spirit comes the challenge of distance that engenders further challenges in the areas of communication, connectivity, collaborative efforts, and collegiality. While many of these challenges can be met through the increased use of technology, with its ability to interconnect individuals, departments, and campuses, our President, Dr. Barbara Mieras, envisioned a College with mutual connectivity at the very core of perpetual learners in a "culture where learning is at the forefront of everything we do." Deeply imbedded in this envisioned culture of learning is a "connected" organization taking closer shape through its guiding principles, e.g., "learning is our first priority," "people are our most valued resource," "teamwork promotes success," "quality is our focus," "entrepreneurial spirit drives action and innovation," and "integrity is our foundation."

The Learning Academy Model

In response to described challenges, and the need to rekindle and strengthen the learning environment, President Mieras, Vice President of the Grand Rapids Campus Jacqueline Taylor, and Vice President for Academic Affairs Linda Lindsay developed a model for transformative change: the Learning Academy Model. The desire to transform the college into a learning-centered organization was the driving force of the model's development. Once the model was developed, the college's Board of Trustees and the College-wide Management Team (CWMT) enthusiastically approved its implementation. (Figure A) (Note that Malcolm Baldrige criteria were imbedded as the assessment tool right from the initial stages.)

Davenport College Learning Academy
A Model for Learning

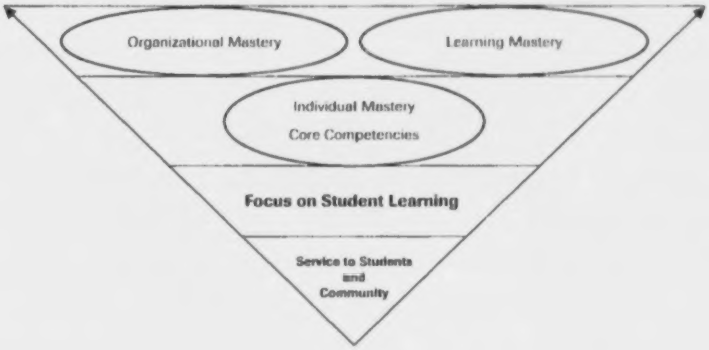

Figure A

The first step towards implementation of the Academy was a two-day retreat of the CWMT. The team was exposed to the initial academy concept model and was positive and supportive about the direction of the college. At this retreat, Malcolm Baldrige consultants and recipients related their experiences, advice, and encouragement as the CWMT was preparing to embark on this quality journey. The second step was the naming of the Director of the academy. The Director's role is to lead the college's efforts to transform itself into a learning-centered environment.

A Strategic Planning Team of cross-functional staff and faculty was established to operationalize the model. The core of the model is the transformation towards individual mastery, organizational mastery, and learning mastery. (Figure B) The concept of mastery is one in which individuals and the organization seek to develop a core set of competencies, then through assessment, develop a plan towards continuous improvement.

Strategic Planning Goals
Davenport College Learning Academy
"Building Leaders though Learning"
Academy Model

Essential Competencies

Individual Mastery

- Technical Skills
- Communication Skills
- Collaboration Skills
  - team building
  - conflict resolution
- Problem Solving
- Strategic Thinking
- Leadership Skills
- Diversity
- Information Literacy
- Customer Service

Continuous Quality Improvement

Organizational Mastery

- TQM
- Baldrige Criteria
- Employee Awards and Recognition
- Institutional Research
- Leadership Development
- Employee Orientations
- Performance Appraisals

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Learning Mastery

- Adult Learner Paradigm
- HBDI
- Assessment
- Perpetual Learning
- Independent
- Collaborative
- Self-directed
- Faculty Development
- Success System

Academy Development

Academy Mastery

- Secure Funding
- Communications
- Establish Steering Committee
- Establish Core Group Trainers
- Establish Baldrige Evaluators and Assessors
- Other

Figure B

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The individual "core competencies" are a set of skills that all members of the staff and faculty develop. These skills were identified by the CWMT, the Academy Strategic Planning Team, and many other staff and faculty. The primary question asked was "What skills do the staff and faculty need to best serve our students?" The core competencies identified are: technical, communication, collaboration, problem solving, and leadership skills; strategic thinking; diversity; information literacy; and customer service. Leadership development and customer service training are two of the top priorities. The college has developed the curriculum, a training schedule, and a plan to have all the staff and faculty develop the core competencies by the 2000-2001 academic year.

The second dimension of the academy model is organizational mastery. Organizational mastery involves the process of assessing institutional outcomes and developing strategic plans to improve the outcomes. This process has been highly focused on student learning and seeks to continuously improve how we do business, especially as it relates to assessing student success and satisfaction. The strategic management tools adopted to improve institutional effectiveness vary. The college is using the Malcolm Baldrige criteria as a tool to assess institutional outcomes and progress. Through the self-assessment process the college is able to determine areas that need improvement. Total quality management (TQM) principles and tools have been utilized to improve these areas.

The institution's mission and vision are the core of a learning organization. In an effort to communicate and educate employees on the purpose of the institution, the Academy has developed an employee orientation–Davenport 101. In this orientation session new and existing employees gain a working knowledge of the college's mission, vision, and guiding principles as well as understand how they contribute to the accomplishment of the college's strategic plan. (Figure C)

Vision Statement

Davenport College is creating a culture where learning is at the forefront of everything we do.

We prepare people for dynamic change and the ability to apply learning in a diverse world of work. The future of the College lies in delivering programs and services known for exceptional quality, infusion of the human touch, and responsiveness to marketplace needs.

Success is measured through student learning, satisfaction, and contributions to the diverse world of work and society. All other internal and external stakeholders validate the College as an effective institution of higher learning and service.

Through the focused, committed efforts of our College community, all of us help the institution build upon entrepreneurial roots that move us toward a successful and resilient future. The dedicated human, financial and technological resources and a variety of external partnerships and sources ensure the College's strength.

Living the vision ensures that more people reap the rewards of our century old belief –
"Make a Living, Make a Life, Make a Contribution."

Mission Statement

Davenport College, an independent, multi-campus institution of higher education, prepares and sustains people for careers in business, allied health and legal professions.

Guiding Principles

Learning is our first priority
People are our most valued resource
Teamwork promotes success
Quality is our focus
Entrepreneurial spirit drives action and innovation
Integrity is our foundation

Figure C

Leadership development for employees is essential to the college's success and sustainability. As much as possible, the college has tried to support the concept that everyone is a leader of his/her own areas. To support this concept, the college has established a Leadership Academy to focus on developing the leadership skills of employees at all levels of the organization. In partnership with the college's MBA program, the Leadership Academy will offer intensive training to a cross section of employees beginning summer 1999. ASQ has recently published a curriculum for TQM at the MBA level, which will support the College's MBA training (Karathanos 1999). To further support leadership training, the college has identified leadership skills as a core competency and plans to have all employees participate in more limited leadership training seminars/workshops.

In an effort to transform the college into a culture of perpetual learners, the third dimension of the Academy Model is learning mastery. If student learning is our first priority, then every moment with a student is a teachable moment. In this dimension, staff and faculty gain a better understanding of adult learning paradigms and how to foster student learning in every interaction with students. It is also the intention of the learning mastery dimension to support the staff and faculty in their own personal and professional development through various training opportunities, book groups, and outside conferences. This portion also emphasizes retention strategies, a critical component of student success and satisfaction.

Opportunities and Success

As a method of immediately moving forward with the Learning Academy, a college-wide "Train the Trainer" Diversity Workshop was created in July of 1998, where over thirty faculty, staff, and administrators from all ten campuses and centers came together for an intensive three-day workshop with a national consultant, Dr. Samuel Betances. Diversity trainers from this group are now in the process of being certified through additional reading assignments, participation in reading groups, and report preparations. These trainers, through the Learning Academy, will further develop diversity workshop curricula and then establish a schedule of training sessions throughout the entire College. In this manner, the communication, curriculum, and training are consistent throughout all ten campuses, thus perpetuating another of the strategic goals related to creating a learning-centered and multi-cultural environment.

At the annual 1998 Fall Convocation, in addition to the President's State of the College address supporting and committing institutional funds to further develop this important Learning Academy, faculty and staff were asked to participate in one of four seminars related to: TQM, Service Excellence, Herman Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI), or a Stephen Covey-Seven Habits Workshop. HBDI workshops have also been presented at many campuses. A side benefit comes with utilizing the talents of our own Davenport faculty and staff, which presents a strong way of recognizing and rewarding internal professional skills.

Training of faculty, staff, and administrators to become the Learning Academy presenters and trainers further establishes the culture of perpetual learning and "connects" individual to individual across the campus and campuses. The Learning Academy covers core competencies. Unintended, but propitious, opportunities also arose with the establishment of the Cisco Regional Academies and the DES Learning Network that "link" together faculty, staff, and administrators from all twenty campuses in specific student focused learning and training. This type of serendipitous connection must continue to be viewed and nourished as additional opportunities for institutional effectiveness and its concurrent measurement and assessment for college-wide and student learning.

Challenges

The structure of the Learning Academy needs to remain flexible enough to recognize, embrace, and assess **all** possible connecting factors. A further, and even more major challenge, is to integrate so fully the Learning Academy and the culture of learning into the entire organization, that it is immediately recognizable and understood by every individual. The Davenport orientation (Davenport 101), developed for participation of every employee, is the critical factor in this recognition process.

As in every institution, time is often as crucial a challenge as funding. Davenport College is no different; staffing is tight, and to provide additional opportunities for learning, while positive and vital to the College, still may be viewed by some as financially and operationally burdensome. Additionally, questions about being "paid" extra funds to conduct seminars or train or for being trained have already been raised by some. Rather than to receive remuneration for these training opportunities, the Learning Academy Director and the CWMT are looking at all possible ways of recognizing and rewarding employees for their participation. Rewards and recognition are positive components of the learning culture that still remain the focus of individual campuses, and it will take time to integrate a college-wide reward and recognition system into the culture.

Developing a group of leaders who have potential for growing and leading the institution; how to develop and present these as learning qualities is being addressed in one manner, mentioned earlier, by a partnership with the MBA program. PepsiCo leadership training also can help serve as a model for our leadership training. Paul Russell, Vice President for Executive Development at PepsiCo, has this to say about leadership development, "...experience continues to be a powerful tool for developing people. But as our need for leaders grows, experience alone is no longer enough. ...we can accelerate development of talented people–and do a better job of cultivating and retaining them–by providing structured opportunities for them to work with, and learn from, senior executives. (a)...'leaders develop leaders' philosophy, ...ensures that both established and emerging leaders gain insights that no outside consultant could provide" (Russell 1999). This type of leader to leader connection will bring about the mentoring component, a vital strength of leadership development.

Another major challenge of the Learning Academy is to have "ownership" assumed by a college-wide team that works together with the Academy Director to develop the overall program with its resultant documentation in accordance with Malcolm Baldrige Criteria. Documentation is absolutely critical, and while documentors on each campus reporting information to the Learning Academy Director can accomplish much of this, the importance needs to be supported by the entire CWMT with a commitment to additional funding, if necessary. Yet another challenging factor is the training of institutional Malcolm Baldrige evaluators who will assist in leading the organization, documentation, and assessment procedures for the College.

A review of the challenges makes prioritization difficult. However, the need for knowledge, of a "buy-in-to" the Learning Academy with its opportunities for organizational change, the development of leaders, and the documentation format, the assessment process, and acceptance of need and responsibility are fundamental to the success of the learning organization and its resultant Learning Academy.

Summary

In summary, the Learning Academy model is a vehicle for the college to transform itself into a learning organization. The transformation is a journey to bring the college closer to accomplishing its mission and vision to "become a culture of perpetual learners where learning is at the forefront of everything we do."

The three dimensions of the academy mode–individual mastery, organizational mastery, and learning mastery–are at the core of the model's success. While Davenport College is at the implementation stage, we are encouraged by the Academy's initial impact on the institution. Many members of the college community understand the concept of a learning-centered organization, and are supportive of the President's direction to become a learning organization. Overall, we are certain that this strategic direction set forth by the college will help us successfully manage the college of the 21st century.

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Benchmarking for Best Practices in Adult Learning

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)

Thomas Flint
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The Adult Learner and Higher Education

Adult learners are the new majority on many college campuses. About only one-quarter of American college students attend full-time as residential students, while nearly half meet one or more of the components in a functional definition of an adult learner. These components would include persons:

- who are no longer financially dependent upon their parents or guardians;
- who have major life responsibilities outside schooling through work, home, or community; or
- whose principal identities have evolved beyond the role of full-time student.

Typically the adult learner is defined as one who is over age 24, married, or has dependents.

Many policies and practices in higher education are holdovers from the time when traditional students predominated on campus. In response to burgeoning numbers of adult learners, guidelines for "good practice" have been developed and promoted by higher education associations in recent years in order to adapt to the unique needs of adults. These statements of "good practice" by adult educators include:

- *Principles of Good Practice for Alternative and External Degree Programs for Adults* (The Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials, American Council on Education, and The Alliance: An Association for Alternative Degree Programs for Adults, 1990).
- *Focus on Adults* (American Council on Education, 1991).
- *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* by Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson (American Association for Higher Education, 1987).

While these are inspiring documents, they represent idealized goals rather than actual research into existing practices that are most effective in helping adult learners. Because they articulate principles rather than models, they are not necessarily built up from rich, contextual knowledge that informs others how to be effective through proven strategy and tactics.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking has gained popularity in the business sector as a research approach that discovers "best practices" in whatever process is designated for study. Benchmarking is a systematic method for measuring and comparing data on the processes of one organization to those of another. Benchmarking studies are used to identify, understand, and adapt outstanding practices from other organizations to help the study sponsors improve their own organizations. In effect, benchmarking is a process improvement technique that begins by recognition that somebody else is better at something than you, and ends by learning how to match or surpass them. Approximately 45 percent of U.S. businesses have used benchmarking, but higher education institutions have barely addressed it.

CAEL's Benchmarking Study for Best Practices in Adult Learning

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and the American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC), two not-for-profit organizations with affiliations to higher education, have undertaken a benchmarking study to find "best practices" in adult learning. In the context of this study, "best practices" are defined as tangible policies and procedures that institutions adopt that lead to the achievement of quality assurance and accessibility for adult learners.

Using a multi-step methodology to nominate, screen, and study potential best practice sites, CAEL and APQC are conducting an in-depth study of six institutions. The preliminary results of the study are expected to be completed by late Spring 1999 and published for CAEL's 25th anniversary conference in Seattle, Washington, November 11-13. The focal process to be studied is how these institutions have "packaged" their instructional and support services to provide outstanding learning opportunities for adults.

The study's outcomes will offer criteria for "Adult Learner Friendly Institutions." Identifying the policies and procedures at work in Adult Learner Friendly Institutions will assist colleges and universities in measuring their effectiveness in reaching and serving the adult work force and will help potential adult learners assess institutions that are responsive to their needs.

It is expected that benchmarking study results will be organized in the following four areas:

1. **Informational issues**

    ◇ **Informing the adult learner.** From course information to comparative data on their peers and program options, adult learners want more information—and of different types—than do traditional students. Exploring the breadth and the depth of information available, the study delves into innovative means and methods of reaching and informing prospective and enrolled adult learners.

    ◇ **Assessing the adult learner.** One key to ensuring success is by first assessing adult learners' needs and capabilities, and using that information to direct the learner to the appropriate assistance or instruction. By providing adults with relevant academic plans, the responsive institution serves the learner and itself by maximizing learners' opportunities for early and sustained successes in achieving academic goals.

2. **Access and equity issues**

    ◇ **Logistics for adult learners.** On many campuses, libraries and laboratories are open extended hours to accommodate adult learners. Unfortunately, too often the list of campus resources readily available ends there. Institutions that reach out to adult learners find innovative ways to deliver a range of services that are "anytime, anyplace, anywhere." They not only address convenience issues, such as parking and public transportation for those attending classes on campus, but also strive to "take the campus to the student" at their homes or workplaces.

    ◇ **Financial opportunities and incentive systems.** Many policies and practices in traditional institutions favor traditional students and ignore the special needs of adult learners. Best-practice institutions are making efforts to provide equitable resources for adult learners, both in terms of financial aid and adequate budgets for the programs. In addition, these institutions make commitments to creating a track to attract and retain top educators.

    ◇ **Technological support.** Adult learners expect institutions to use the current technology they have in the workplace. Given the fact that continuous improvements and falling prices have moved powerful technology into their homes and workplaces, adult learners look for institutions to integrate technologies into their educational services. This can increase the convenience for adults in every aspect of their educational experience.

3. **Academic and social integration**

    ◇ **Transitioning into the learner role.** Most adults haven't been in formal study in many years. Adult learners need to be treated differently than traditional students, and addressed in ways that make them feel more comfortable about the learning experience. The curriculum is constructed for an adult learner, combining practical lectures and experiences applicable to their work or home lives. The academic and social atmospheres are conducive for adults, and an orientation is provided to address the variety of transitioning questions and issues that confront adults who are returning to student status.

- ◇ **Connecting to faculty and educational resources.** Beyond readjusting to the student role, adult learners have many pragmatic interests that must be addressed. Adult learners need to engage with faculty in a variety of formats, and can benefit from active learning techniques by reflecting upon their own experiences. The faculty must be prepared for the real-time needs of adult learners by offering flexibility in the times for "office hours" and other student interactions.
- ◇ **Connecting with fellow adult learners and the community.** Adult learners cannot succeed in social isolation, even in purely distance-delivered programs. By creating adult learner groups, institutions build powerful networks of motivation, support, reflection, and inquiry by which to propel educational progress forward. When home and community environments further support learners, even greater gains are possible. Yet none of this happens automatically; innovative institutions design their programs and services to leverage these resources.

4. **Career connections**

- ◇ **Institutional labor market research.** Institutions with outstanding support for adult learners actively solicit the input of adult learners, employers, unions, and the local community. Based on this information, these institutions are able to identify new areas of opportunity, and provide the curriculum that adults need and want.
- ◇ **Connecting employers and the curriculum.** Institutions that actively seek adult students also actively seek the input of the employer community. They do not push their curriculum on their business partners, but encourage their participation in the learning design, development, and delivery process to ensure that it has practical applications for the adult learner. Innovative curricula plan for learner achievement not only in "hard skills" but also in "soft skills" and attitudes conducive to lifelong learning. Educational assignments integrate actual work commitments, tasks, and problems into creditable learning.

Studying "Best Practices" Institutions

Through a comprehensive benchmarking screening process the following six institutions were selected for in-depth study:

- Athabasca University, Athabasca, Alberta, Canada
- College of New Rochelle, School of New Resources, Coop City Campus, Bronx, New York
- DePaul University, The School for New Learning, Chicago, Illinois
- Empire State College (SUNY), Saratoga Springs, New York
- Marylhurst University, Marylhurst, Oregon
- Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio

As part of the study, each institution was asked to respond to a series of questions developed by the benchmarking project team. Addressing the areas cited above, the institutions responded to such questions as:

- What common misconceptions about your programs are held by adult learners that your institutions serve? How does the institution try to dispel them?
- Provide examples of institutional flexibility (e.g., time, space, or content) in delivery systems for your adult learner programs and their support services. What principles guide decisions about flexibility that the institution can or cannot accommodate?
- How do instructional practices at your institution encourage adults to learn in ways that lower their risks of failure or loss of self-esteem?
- What instruction does the institution provide in workplaces? How does the institution integrate its student support services to workplace-based learning programs?

Through site visits, the benchmarking team will discuss the answers to these and other questions with representatives from the selected institutions. At the time of publication of this briefing paper, the site visits have not yet taken place. However, the visits will be completed by April and the study's preliminary findings will be offered at CAEL's presentation at the North Central Association Annual Meeting. A more complete report on the study will be ready at the end of the summer.

Soliciting Feedback and Developing Models

In order to influence change successfully in higher education for the adult learner, the study must necessarily involve the buy-in of major stakeholders. Therefore, after studying the six sites, CAEL will refine the study's findings by soliciting feedback from business leaders and adult learners. CAEL will also seek input from higher education leaders and work with them to determine the barriers that prevent colleges and universities from adopting the "best practices." In this way, CAEL will be able to offer a model of *High Performance Adult Learner Services.* This model will not only identify the principles—or ideal—for quality assurance, but will also identify the practices necessary to achieve the ideal. Once institutions are aware of and strive toward the principles, this model will assist institutions in improving their services and also in devising innovative methods of providing these services to adult learners.

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The 5-E Report Card Review and Institutional Effectiveness at Arizona Western College

Kevin Trutna
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Institutional Effectiveness Approach

Managing change is one of the more challenging aspects in higher education today. It is important that decisions be based upon a common direction shaped by a well-defined vision. Institutional effectiveness is one process that assists administrators at Arizona Western College (AWC) in accomplishing these tasks. An Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Committee reviews institutional progress and provides recommendations for improvement. Key personnel, including instructors, directors, coordinators, and student services personnel collaborate in evaluating programs and service units of the college. Additionally, the District Governing Board recently adopted a unique 6-E Decision-Making Model where decisions are evaluated based on **excellence, equity, efficiency, effort, effectiveness,** and **ethics.** Due to difficulties in establishing quantitative standards, the ethics component was not included in the "test" of the pilot instructional program review. Based upon the institution's model, a 5-E Report Card was established for instructional program review as part of the planned change process at AWC.

To strengthen institutional effectiveness, the IE Steering Committee is now implementing measurable standards as well as integrating the 6-E Decision-Making Model into program reviews district-wide. The anticipated result is to develop a "report card" in each program review area to generate change and overall institutional effectiveness. The report card has been pilot tested in three instructional areas and it relies on data, rather than anecdotes, for decision making. Administrative decisions at AWC can now be based upon facts to guide the direction of the college and to manage change, emphasizing improvement of institutional programs and services.

Description of College and Service Area

Arizona Western College spans the southwest corner of Arizona and serves two counties, Yuma and La Paz. The college's service area encompasses 10,000 square miles, bordering California to the west and Mexico to the south. AWC operates with 75% of its enrollment at the main campus in Yuma, a center in Parker (La Paz County), and centers in San Luis and Somerton (Southern Yuma County). Instruction is also delivered at several off-campus sites in addition to the interactive television (distance education) network, which is available throughout the two-county service area. The college's fall 1998 student headcount enrollment was 5889 with 29% considered full-time students and 60% representing ethnic minorities. The average age of students is 29. Seven instructional divisions offer classes leading to 23 Associate of Arts degrees, 27 Associate of Applied Science degrees, and 21 certificate programs. The college employs nearly 100 full-time and 300 part-time faculty to deliver instruction, awarding over 300 associate degrees and certificates annually.

Components of Instructional Program Review

The purpose of **Instructional Program Review** at AWC is to bring about systematic improvement in instructional programs. The design is for continuous improvement through the use of a SWOT analysis model where each instructional division assesses its own **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities,** and **Threats.** Each Program Review Committee is representative of division faculty, students, faculty from outside the division, and support personnel. Community advisory members are sought where appropriate in the occupational program areas. All instructional programs are reviewed at least once during a five-year rotating cycle.

Instructional Program Review encompasses a study ranging from 12 to 15 months in length. Each review committee must first determine what questions need to be answered. Sources of input are identified and data are collected through surveys, college databases, focus groups, and through internal and external means. The results are analyzed and a SWOT analysis is performed. Conclusions and recommendations are provided to the Dean of Instruction and the Vice-President for Instructional Services. A reporting session and a feedback loop are included in the process. The purpose of program review is to provide an in-depth look at each instructional program, identify areas that need improvement, and shift essential resources toward resolution of those needs.

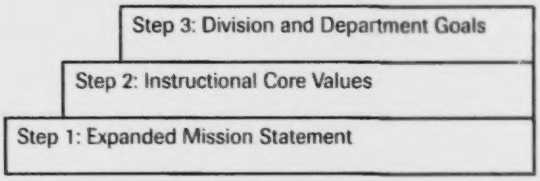
A 1990 Title III Grant assisted AWC in establishing a Center for Teaching Effectiveness (CTE). The CTE now serves as a resource for all instructional program reviews. At the completion of the program review process, each instructional division is eligible to apply for **mini-grants,** which are available to implement recommendations and to promote further inquiry.

One area overlooked in AWC's previous program review process was the staff's ability to establish benchmarks in instructional programs and measure them against predetermined objectives. The data used in program reviews were either trend- or qualitative-based information. While the SWOT analysis provides a vehicle for introspection, it does not allow for quantitative measurement against external standards. Implementation of the 5-E Report Card Model does allow college personnel to set quantitative measures and evaluative results based on those standards.

Transition to Quantitative Measurement

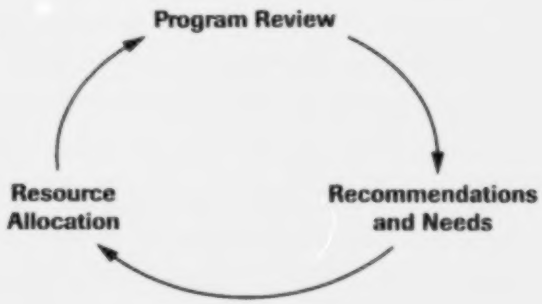
Strategic planning for **change** and **improvement** became the cornerstones for institutional effectiveness at AWC with issuance of the President's *2005 - A Vision in Progress.* This document provides the vision and direction for the college over the next five-seven years. It also specifies the objectives for the current academic year. Every year, the *Vision* document is to be updated and extended. This approach allows for an institution-wide strategic method of planning, focusing on a proactive approach to higher education administration. It is also designed to identify and address recurring problems within the institution, drawing on the college's personnel and financial resources.

The first step in building *2005 - A Vision in Progress* emphasizes the development of the AWC Expanded Mission Statement. After establishment of the college mission statement, the Instructional Services unit then developed a set of **core values** in support of the mission statement. Finally, divisions and departments developed goals to support the core values. Thus, a common direction was established for all entities as illustrated below:


Step 3: Division and Department Goals
Step 2: Instructional Core Values
Step 1: Expanded Mission Statement

In building the quantitative measures, staff incorporated the SWOT analysis that was in existence through instructional program review. Additionally, the need to leverage resources (personnel and financial) toward program review outcomes was often described as hit-or-miss and generally based upon anecdotal information. Staff recognized the need to encompass aspects of *2005 - A Vision in Progress* into formal evaluations of instructional programs. As well, staff noted a separate budgeting process in existence, which did not clearly link to program review. To ensure systematic improvement, staff recognized that program review recommendations needed to be integrated within the budgeting process. Therefore, the institution-wide strategic plan in *2005 - A Vision in Progress* became the framework for the college's evaluation and resource allocation model. Furthermore, with the development of well-defined vision and mission statements supported by instructional personnel, a strategic operational plan for decision making was now possible. Resources could be coupled with instructional needs. The adoption of the 6-E Decision-Making Model makes it possible to base decisions upon specific objectives.

The following diagram illustrates the flow of the new 6-E Decision-Making Model.



Description of 6-E Program Review Model

The Institution's 6-E Decision-Making Model measures administrative decisions based on the following descriptors:

- ☐ **Excellence:** the decision provides for high quality, outstanding educational results.
- ☐ **Equity:** the decision allows for reasonable participation from target populations in the college service area.
- ☐ **Efficiency:** the decision produces the desired results within defined organizational resources.
- ☐ **Effort:** the decision will be maintained by staff commitment.
- ☐ **Effectiveness:** the decision implementation can be successfully measured by outcomes and/or results.
- ☐ **Ethics:** the decision supports behavior congruent with college values, principles, and moral standards.

All administrative decisions encompass these six measures. The next step is to identify quantifiable standards against which instructional decisions can be made.

Application of the 5-E Report Card

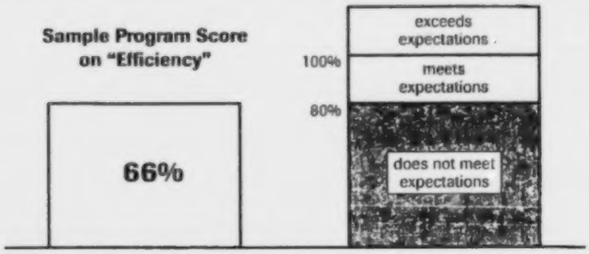
The pilot program establishes pre-determined benchmarks to measure instructional programs and produces a report card that assists with resource allocation and decision making. The report card is only one part of the college's planning and program improvement processes. It is used in conjunction with the qualitative data and SWOT analysis. Because it is difficult to establish criteria and quantitatively measure the sixth element, ethics was omitted from the pilot program. Therefore, established criteria and the 5-E Report Card for instructional programs include quantitative scores (grades) in five areas: **Excellence, Equity, Efficiency, Effort,** and **Effectiveness.** The chart following illustrates a sample report card score for one instructional program based upon indicators and quantitative data when applied to the "Efficiency" area of program review.

Expansion of the Report Card Model

The goal of the college's Institutional Effectiveness Steering Committee is to develop report card criteria for all areas of the college, including student support (Counseling, Career Development, Financial Aid, etc.) and administrative services (Computer Services, Human Resources, Business Office, etc.). This will provide the needed link between resource allocation and identified needs of each program or service area on an institution-wide basis. AWC will then be in a position to anticipate, react, and respond to the needs of its internal administrative, instructional, and student services units. The proactive approach to managing change is viewed by AWC administrators as a critical aspect in remaining competitive and responsive to current and emerging educational needs in the community. AWC officials believe the 6-E Decision-Making Model and corresponding 5-E Report Card will assist Arizona Western College in meeting its mission of "offering educational, career, and lifelong learning opportunities through innovative partnerships which enhance the lives of people in Yuma and La Paz counties."

Efficiency

Data	Benchmark or Target	Program Score	Percent of Benchmark Obtained	Weight	Weight Adjusted Score
Percent of on-campus designated room and times in use by program	80%	64%	80.13%	2	1.6025
Percent of sections on-campus taught in designated rooms	90%	78%	86.44%	3	2.593333
Percent of sections at least 85% of designated capacity at end of drop/add period	90%	22%	24.00%	3	0.72
Average section size for GE courses	24	18.6	77.50%	3	2.325
Average section size for NON-GE courses	20	13.5	67.50%	3	2.025


Sample Program Score on "Efficiency"

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Connecting with Quality in the Business Community: ISO Registration

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In December 1997, the Business and Technical Training (B&TT) Division of Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) in Grand Rapids, Michigan, made the strategic decision to pursue ISO 9002 registration. Currently, only 12 educational institutions in North America have attained this quality management system registration common to business and industry. Members of the B&TT/GRCC ISO Guidance Team will discuss the benefits of registration to the academic institution, methods to establish a process for attaining ISO registration, and lessons learned and their applicability to the NCA accreditation process.

Why Should I Care

Do you at your institution need to worry about quality? Who defines quality as it may relate to your service(s)? You may wonder, "I hear this is just about killing lots of trees; where is the value?" "Why should we care about an ISO quality management system registration when we are NCA-CIHE accredited?"

These may be questions you are asking yourself...or should ask yourself. The answers will lead you to the conclusion that this ISO management quality system "thing," is, at a minimum, something you need to investigate further.

We in the B&TT Division of GRCC have found that, since our customers worry about quality, we need to as well. Our customers consider quality in every component of their operation that affects the ultimate quality of their products; that includes their expectations of the services they receive from us. Our customers include students, companies who hire those students or desire additional training of their current workforce, and people/organizations who subsidize our operations (e.g., tax payers, contributors, state agencies). These "customers" define quality for us.

At this point you are saying, "Wait a minute, this is one of the weirdoes from the "Shadow College." "This doesn't have anything to do with what I do at this institution." No? Stick around. *Your* customers have explicit or implicit expectations—attain a degree, be prepared for transfer or for graduate school, secure a job, enter a profession, be able to increase the efficiency of their operation. Any of these sound familiar?

Once we understand the requirements, expectations, and needs of our customers, we can attack the question of how to meet these needs. To meet the needs, we require institutional support in the form of curriculum development, materials, classrooms, equipment, training, and other resources. How do you manage resources at your institution? Do you know the process or do you grumble, thinking it takes too long to get what's needed? Do different groups within the institution have different ways of accomplishing the same activity?

These questions are leading to why you and your institution should be interested in an ISO quality management system. Such a system allows you to meet the customers' needs in an efficient, effective, complete manner. Purchasing? Everyone does it the same way, and it is documented so everyone knows his or her part in that process. Entities that have adopted such a system have enjoyed the benefits of doing more with less, doing it right the first time, being in a competitive edge position, knowing whether they've reached their goals and the customers expectations, and establishing the philosophy and process of continuous improvement.

Another reason our Division chose to establish an ISO quality management system was our need to "walk the talk." We assist other companies in becoming ISO registered and are now holding our own operation to the same quality standard. We also believe that our quality management system affords us more "agility"–the ability to respond quickly to customer's changing requirements–than traditional institutional hierarchies.

This is all well and good, but we are NCA-CIHE accredited. Are there differences with which we should be concerned? Yes. There are telling differences related to the formal accreditation (registration in ISO 9001/2[1]) process and the requirements/standards, as well as the establishment of an internal process for attaining accreditation (registration).

ISO Quality Management System Registration vs. NCA-CIHE Accreditation

The following table begins to show some of the differences between the formal ISO 9001/2 registration and the NCA-CIHE accreditation process.

ISO 9001/2	NCA-CIHE
Registration	Accreditation
Internal audits (at least 1 per year) and desk audit	Self-Study (10 year cycle)
Management Representative	Self-Study Coordinator
Registrar auditors	Consultant-Evaluators
Site visit/compliance audit	Team visit (focused or comprehensive)
Surveillance audits (every 6-12 months)	Only 10 year cycle
Records vs. Documents	Documentation vs. Policies, Procedures, Guidance
Responsibility (Management and all)	Administrative Responsibility
20 elements with specific requirements/ standards ("shalls")	GIRs and Criteria (more open-ended)
Objective evidence	Patterns of evidence

Some of these differences may look strictly semantical, but as we inspect them more closely during the Annual Meeting, you will see the resulting benefits from the differences.

ISO 9001/2 Requirements/Standards vs. NCA-CIHE GIRs and Criteria

The following table begins to show some of the differences between the ISO 9001/2 requirements/standards and the NCA-CIHE GIRs and Criteria. ISO 9001/2 requirements are very clear–the statements always include the word "shall."

ISO 9001/2	NCA-CIHE
Systems thinking (forces all to look at the whole system)	Vague. More "silos"
Continuous improvement is encouraged	Limited checks to see if it happens. (Ten year cycle; previous concerns)
Communication and teamwork are required	Widespread campus involvement is Encouraged. A strong Self-Study Steering committee (p. 71)

At the Annual Meeting, we will share a matrix with you, comparing the ISO 9001 element requirements and the NCA-CIHE GIRs and Criteria.

Establishing the Process for Attaining ISO 9001/9002 Compliance vs. NCA-CIHE Accreditation Readiness

In order to be successful in your quest to be ISO 9001/2 registered, you must have certain supports in place and establish a process. The following table provides some contrast and/or food for thought, comparing the process for attaining ISO 9001/2 compliance (e.g., you are ready to be registered) and being ready for NCA-CIHE accreditation.

ISO 9001/2	Sound Familiar ...
Must have management support and commitment (Quality Policy Statement & Quality Manual)	Criteria One and Two: GIRs related to Mission, Authorization, and Governance
Form a Guidance Team	Self-Study Team
Timeline/plan	Same
Responsibility matrix	Same
Training (a lot is required)	Criteria Two; GIRs re: Faculty
Start with 4.5 - Document & Data Control	What a concept!!!
Communication (meetings, training, visuals)	Self-Study/Continuous Improvement "An institution plans and undertakes a self-study process to determine how well it meets the Commission's Requirements and Criteria and to clarify its plans for improving and enhancing its programs and operations." (p. 69)
Develop a process for developing written policies, procedures, work instructions[2]	Criteria Two and Four: GIRs related to Educational Programs and Finances

At the Annual Meeting, we will take a closer look at being prepared for registration.

Things Learned

In going through the effort to be compliant with the ISO 9002 requirements, and prepare for our registration audit, our Division has learned many valuable lessons, including:

- One person cannot successfully accomplish all requirements for compliance. Strong management support and sub-team leaders are necessary.
- When documenting the process, keep it simple. Complexity does not result in efficiency and improvement.
- One of the guiding premises of ISO 9002 is continuous improvement of your processes; but you have to implement an "initial" release of a procedure in order to improve it. So don't spend all your time trying to make it perfect, when you never will–let the "system" do that for you.
- ANSI/ASQC Z1.11-1996, is the set of quality assurance standards and guidelines for the application of ANSI/ISO/ASQC Q9001 or Q9002 to education and training institutions. This document is very helpful, but the "guidance" is just that. You need to look at the standard and what you do (your activity/business) in order to decide what is the most appropriate method of compliance with the ISO 9001/2 standard.
- The Management Rep needs to be able to keep the timeline on track, provide assistance and train employees, and delegate appropriately. Good management reps do not do it alone.
- Almost every group seeking ISO 9001/2 registration eventually runs out of steam, gets diverted, or simply thinks it's too busy. Some actions that can rejuvenate your effort include: start conducting internal audits, have a visual management wall, have management reinforce commitment.

- Your staff will begin to communicate and respond more effectively with your customers. They are now experiencing the requirements of the private sector. Also, students become alumni, workers for local businesses, community members, and taxpayers. Some students may return for additional training. Good relationships with students and business partners benefit your institution now and in the long run.
- Even before your entire system is in place, you will begin to see the benefits. But you'll only be successful in attaining registration if the system documented becomes the way you do business, not some overlay. A piece of paper that says you are ISO 9002 registered will not bring about the improvement–people and processes will.

Where's the Meat? The Benefits

So what did you say we were going to get from this? For each entity that has gone through this process and truly adopted if for all its activities, the areas of greatest value differ. Some of the benefits we have already garnered from our efforts to become ISO 9002 compliant, include:

- Efficiency of our trainee tracking
- Documentation of our processes resulting in only one process and smooth transition when people are not available (e.g., leave of absence)
- Establishment and tracking of performance measurements (beyond the traditional educational institution measurements)
- Addressing customer concerns more efficiently
- Involving everyone in improving our operations
- Positive customer reaction (resulting in customer retention and new customers)

Other benefits that we are expecting to receive from being ISO 9002 registered, include:

- Total division efficiency–be able to do more with the same resources (have already seen an increase in revenue without increasing number of staff)
- Reach and maintain our goal of being our customers preferred provider
- Decrease response time, making us even more "agile"
- Reduce need for reactive mode and increase proactive approach in customer satisfaction efforts

Any of these sound like things your operation would love to attain? Come and hear more in our session.

Notes

[1] ISO 9001/2, refers to two options of the ISO quality management system–ISO 9001 and ISO 9002. The difference between these two standards is that ISO 9001 includes Design Control.

[2] Flow chart the "as is," review and compare the "as is," upgrade and create the "should be" flowchart, document the "should be," and implement the "should be."

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Measures, Plans, and Improvements: Putting It All Together

Thomas Franke
Kathryn Shaffer

With increasing public scrutiny, academia is being held accountable for achieving outcomes and for the resources it employs in producing results. Lansing Community College (LCC), like other higher education institutions, has been besieged with the need to collect data (performance and outcome indicators) for various internal and external requirements. This demand for accountability through measurement has taxed our resources. When perceived as discrete activities, these multiple initiatives can promote cynicism and confusion. This paper describes a system designed to coordinate our data and reporting requirements and to integrate the information into a comprehensive planning and institutional improvement approach. This strategy will enable LCC to be effective and efficient in gathering, utilizing, and disseminating the necessary information to the appropriate person/department upon demand.

Lansing Community College

Of the 28 public community colleges in Michigan, Lansing Community College is the third largest in enrollment, offering more than 2,500 courses in 150 degree and certificate programs—with transfer options to more than 30 colleges and universities. With 78% part-time faculty, multiple locations and delivery modes, and predominantly part-time students, the challenge for any reporting system is to convince this diverse audience that information gathering and reporting is more than an annoying bureaucratic necessity.

Sources of Internal and External Data Requirements

Over time, Lansing Community College has found itself needing to respond to numerous internal initiatives and plans, as well as external sources to whom we are accountable, including:

- ◇ **Institutional effectiveness.** LCC's Research and Effectiveness Council has committed the College to employing the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Criteria as a developmental framework for building a coherent institutional effectiveness effort. The seven values and concepts category areas form an integrated structure of numerous direct linkages among the categories. The intent is to accumulate a body of knowledge, from the set of measures/indicators used, to help the school learn and to improve from that learning.

- ◇ **LCC board policies.** Boards of Trustees typically require regular reports on the progress and effectiveness of the institution. LCC's Board of Trustees has adopted a policy governance approach modeled after that proposed by John Carver. These policies require regular reports from the president demonstrating that the College is meeting the policy requirements established by the Board.

- ◇ **LCC program review process.** In the Fall of 1998, LCC launched a new Instructional Program Review process. (A program effectiveness review process for non-instructional programs is under development.) Having been developed with input from the faculty and program administrators, 19 key indicators in nine categories were selected as primary measures of program effectiveness. Parallel to, but separate from, the Effectiveness Review is a Need and Cost Review. While the latter review will occur every year for every program, the Program Effectiveness Review is set up on a four-year cycle, with a faculty consultant team guiding the process.

- ◇ **LCC strategic plan.** As a result of a charge from President Sykes and subsequent campus-wide input events, eight strategic goals were finalized in January 1998. These goals—**transform, equip, lead, serve, build, extend, attract**, and **learn**—along with measurable core indicators, are meant to set direction and guide decision-making for the College.

- ◇ **Michigan Community College Association (MCCA).** To provide outcome data proactively for various constituencies, a task force was formed to recommend core performance indicators for Michigan community colleges. Ultimately, ten indicators were selected.

- ◇ **North Central Association.** As a result of our 1993 site visit, LCC wrote a Plan for Assessment of Student Academic Achievement. Responding to the five Criteria for Accreditation set forth by NCA as well as to our mission statement, we wrote four plans for the instructional goals (general education, basic skills, transfer education, and career education) set by the College. Each plan specifies expected student outcomes, the population of students to whom the outcomes pertain, measures and indicators, measurement cycle and responsibility, implementation date, and how the results are to be shared and used.

- ◇ **Perkins standards and measures.** As indicated by the Perkins Act, each state board develops and implements a statewide system of core standards for and measures of performance for…postsecondary and adult vocational education programs. The Michigan Department of Education, along with the State's community colleges, have established such a system. The main focus is on student academic achievement and how well students enrolled in programs are doing in their coursework.

The Retreat—A Meeting of the Minds

It became clear that LCC needed a systematic process for gathering and coordinating the data utilized in the various reporting requirements. To brainstorm the possibilities, key college leaders and representative faculty and staff were brought together for a day. The purpose of the retreat was to determine a system for coordinating the information and data selected as indicators of institutional effectiveness for the various initiatives/programs at LCC. The desired outcome was even more lofty–the development of a plan or model that would enable LCC to be effective and efficient in gathering, utilizing, and disseminating the appropriate data to the appropriate person/department.

To achieve the desired purpose and outcome, we had to address issues such as:

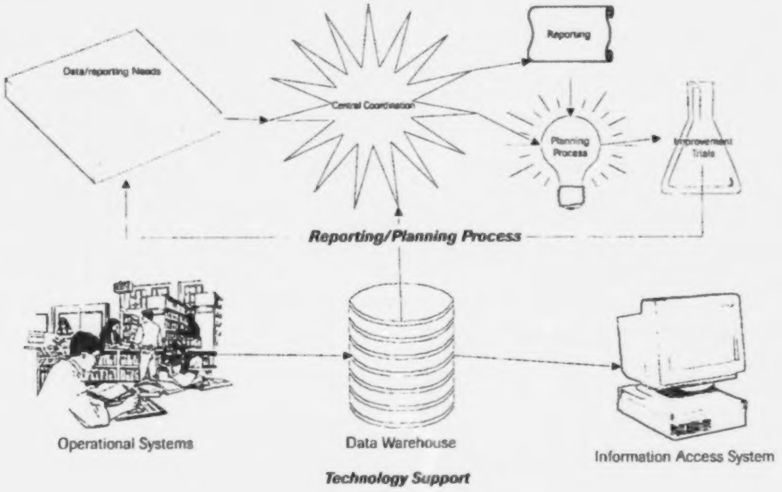
1. What are the major programs/initiatives that demand report accountability?
2. What sorts of data do we need to collect as indicators?
3. Where are the overlaps in the indicators?
4. Where does the information need to end up? Who needs it?
5. How might the data be collected once, and disseminated and/or made accessible to those who need it?
6. How does this information fit into the College's Institutional Effectiveness Plan?
7. How will this information drive the LCC's Strategic Plan and Quality Improvement efforts?

After reviewing the required reporting, we spent the afternoon in small groups developing possible strategies and presenting them to the entire group. Incredibly, each of the models/plans was fairly complete–despite the relatively short time span given to that task.

A final debriefing discussion focused on the newly-created plans. We were amazed at the commonalities shared by the four small groups' models. Overlapping features included a matrix of data elements, many of which were shared by multiple reporting requirements and all of which could be fit within the broad institutional effectiveness categories of the Baldrige model. (See the following page for a "cleaned up" version of the matrix.) Groups also identified the need for some type of data or information warehouse–a central data storage system. There was recognition that standards and security would be needed in data collection and that access to the information would require a very comprehensible indexing and cataloging system. To be meaningful, the data would need to come together in some kind of comprehensive evaluation plan and lead directly to institutional improvement.

A Composite Model to "Connect the Disconnects"

The best ideas noted above were synthesized into a model that appears to be able to **"connect the disconnects."** This model integrates reporting requirements, institutional planning, and quality improvement efforts into a single process that focuses the College on using information to promote its mission. Information technology provides the underlying support system to enable effective implementation.



Supporting the Process

Although our College is attempting to employ information-based decision-making, efforts are often frustrated by difficulty in accessing needed information in a timely fashion. Furthermore, faculty and staff often interact first with one of the initiatives–such as faculty with North Central Outcomes Assessment or program review–and wonder how that initiative relates to college goals and improvement. The model addresses that concern.

By building a campus-wide data network, upgrading desktop computers, and establishing software standards, the College has created an environment where collaboration through technology is possible. We are now in the second year of implementing a new suite of computer systems. Included in this project will be a data warehouse and an information access system that will allow easy access to reliable data. A final component in supporting the process is the training of faculty and staff in the use of the technology and in the manipulation and interpretation of the data.

Conclusion

The model presented here was developed inductively as an attempt to find some order in a variety of data collection, reporting, planning, and effectiveness initiatives. Although the model could be of some value by merely coordinating and simplifying reporting processes, its potential to transform and energize the College will be realized only with strong institutional commitment. The President's Cabinet can reinforce such commitment by making the model the source of institutional planning and decision-making.

Our hope is that the common model will provide focus, understanding, and buy-in. If those goals can be achieved, the end result will be improved quality in fulfilling our institutional mission.

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Appendix

Outcomes Matrix

	Baldrige Criteria							Reporting Initiatives					
INDICATORS	Leadership	Strategic Planning	Student/ Stakeholder Focus	Information & Analysis	Faculty/ Staff Focus	Educational & Support Process Management	School Performance Results	NCA	Program Review	MCCA	Perkins	Strategic Planning	Board Ends
Access			X			X			X				
Business/Industry Satisfaction			X							X			
Community Satisfaction			X							X			
Course Completion Rates							X	X					
Curriculum/Instruction			X			X	X		X				
Degree/Certificate Completion Rates			X				X	X	X				
Diversity			X		X	X			X				
Effective Partnerships			X									X	
Employer Satisfaction			X						X	X			
Employment in the Field			X				X	X				X	
Enrollment Trends				X					X				
Faculty/Staff Satisfaction					X				X				
Graduate Satisfaction with Job Preparation			X				X		X				
High School Graduates Enrolled				X								X	
Job Placement & Wage Rates			X				X			X			
Labor Market Opportunities			X	X					X				
Lansing Businesses Choose LCC for Training			X									X	
Learning Organization					X							X	
Licensure Exam Pass Rates			X				X	X		X	X		
NCA Accreditation				X						X			
Number of Graduates in Career Programs							X	X					
Number of Students Enrolled in Non-Traditional Classes				X								X	
Occ'l Student Achievement of Non-Program Competencies							X				X		
Occ'l Students Achievement in Advanced Academic Competencies							X				X		
Occ'l Students Achievement of Work Skills							X				X		
% of Former Basic Skills Students Completing College Level Courses			X				X	X		X			
% of LCC Students Attaining BA/BS Compared with Native Students				X			X			X			
% of Students Transferring within 3-5 years							X	X					
% of Students with Basic Skills (College Ready)			X					X					
% of Students/Staff Rating LCC as Exceptional			X		X							X	
Program Cost				X	X		X		X				
Retaining Successful Employment Over Time				X			X				X		
Retention						X	X		X				
Student Access and Quality in Service Areas			X									X	
Student Achievement							X		X				
Student Achievement of Core Outcomes							X	X				X	
Student Goal Attainment			X				X	X	X	X			
Student Knowledge of Diversity Issues			X		X							X	
Student Satisfaction			X				X		X	X			
Student/Internal Client Rating Institutional Responsiveness			X		X		X					X	
Success in Subsequent Courses			X			X		X		X			
Transfer Institution Satisfaction							X		X				

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Connecting Self-Study and Institutional Effectiveness

Stephen Jonas
Lori Zakel

The information provided in Sinclair Community College's Self-Study and Framework for Strategic Planning, prepared during the 1996-97 academic year, reflects input from faculty, staff, students, trustees, and many individuals in the community. The self-study/strategic planning process had two purposes. The first was to assess the status of Sinclair Community College in preparation for an accreditation review, scheduled for November 1997, by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA). The second was to provide an updated framework for the Sinclair strategic planning document, thus linking self-study and institutional effectiveness.

Accreditation, the College's planning process, assessment activities, and the Sinclair Quality Initiative are concerned with the effectiveness of Sinclair Community College (SCC) and its overall and continuing improvement. These processes involve evaluating the nature of SCC's mission and purposes, institutional resources, educational purposes, educational effectiveness, and integrity.

Combining the NCA self-study with the strategic planning process was a natural and essential decision for the benefit of the College. Self-examination is the basis of the College's processes not only for accreditation, but also for planning since both are concerned with the quality and effectiveness of the institution and its overall improvement. Specifically, the accreditation self-study/strategic planning process provided an opportunity for Sinclair to:

- review the College's progress since the last self-study in 1986-87
- review the appropriateness of SCC's mission and governance structure
- assess the effectiveness of the College's planning processes
- assess the perceptions that internal and external constituencies had about Sinclair
- identify internal and external trends that have shaped institutional development to date and were likely to influence it in the future
- identify key indicators of institutional effectiveness consistent with SCC's vision
- affirm shared institutional values among constituencies
- create a shared vision for the future direction of the institution, programs, and services
- identify targets of opportunity and initiate process improvement activities consistent with the vision and the Sinclair Quality Initiative
- communicate with key internal and external constituencies about institutional accomplishments and the vision for the future
- identify appropriate community needs and opportunities that Sinclair should address in the future
- develop a document that will serve as a blueprint for the next ten years of institutional development and as a guide for annual planning and budgeting

The framework for the self-study/strategic planning process was the College's Vision Statement and the Institutional Effectiveness Model.

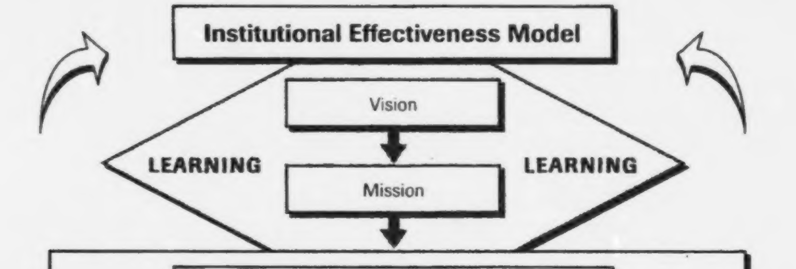
Sinclair...Bridge to the Future

Before us lie uncharted worlds of opportunity.
Sinclair will be the bridge into that future, giving open access to opportunity, intellectual challenge, and self-discovery for students with diverse needs.

With Sinclair, people will pursue their quests for lifelong learning through affordable, high quality education. At Sinclair, people will benefit from a caring approach to teaching and learning that provides personal attention and encourages individual growth. Through Sinclair, people will be empowered with knowledge and skills for their journeys into tomorrow.

Our success shall hinge on turning these values into action:

dedication to quality and excellence;
reliance on anticipation, imagination, and innovation;
commitment to responsible citizenship within our community;
adherence to the Sinclair credo-"find the need and endeavor to meet it";
confidence in the courage, determination, and diversity of our students, employees, and supporters; and
belief in unlimited human potential.


Institutional Effectiveness Model
Vision
LEARNING
Mission
LEARNING
Core Indicators of Effectiveness
Institution Key Perfrmance Indicators
Mission
Lifelong Learning
Student Development
Community Focus
Quality Workplace
Stewardship
Continuous Improvement
Strategic Planning Initiatives
Mission Models and
Critical Performance Areas
Continuous Improvement
Division / Department
Key Performance Indicators
Continuous Improvement Targets
Institution / Division / Department / Team / Individual

The Vision Statement provides a focus for the Sinclair Quality Initiative and continuous improvement program. The Institutional Effectiveness Model and its six Core Indicators provide a framework for assessing how well the College is carrying out its mission and realizing its vision. The six Core Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness are as follows.

- ◇ **Access to success.** Sinclair facilitates access to success for students to achieve their educational goals through participation in meaningful learning opportunities.
- ◇ **Lifelong learning.** Sinclair facilitates lifelong learning through learning opportunities that promote personal and professional growth throughout a lifetime.
- ◇ **Student development.** Sinclair facilitates student development inside and outside the classroom and supports development of the whole person.
- ◇ **Community focus.** Sinclair serves as a catalyst for regional cooperation and leadership.
- ◇ **Quality workplace.** Sinclair nurtures and supports a workforce and organizational structure dedicated to continuous improvement.
- ◇ **Stewardship.** Sinclair ensures institutional effectiveness through prudent use of College resources and dedication to continuous improvement.

The College used a strategic planning engine developed by Dolence and Norris (1994). Conceptually, the strategic planning engine links the development of strategic initiatives and decision-making with organizational Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Sinclair identified an initial set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each Core Indicator. KPIs assess the College's overall performance and assist in targeting areas for continuous improvement.

Ten steps identified by Dolence and Norris and used by Sinclair in conducting the NCA self-study/strategic planning process are shown below.

Ten Steps of the Strategic Planning Process

1. Develop Key Performance Indicators.
2. Perform an external environmental assessment (PEST analysis – political, economic, sociological, and technological trends and events; analysis of collaborators; analysis of competitors).
3. Perform an internal environmental assessment.
4. Perform a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats).
5. Conduct brainstorming.
6. Evaluate the potential impact of each idea on each SWOT.
7. Formulate strategies, mission, goals, and objectives.
8. Conduct a cross-impact analysis to determine the impact of proposed strategies, goals, and objectives on an organization's ability to achieve its key performance indicators (KPIs).
9. Finalize and implement strategies, goals, and objectives.
10. Evaluate actual impact of strategies, goals, and objectives on organizational KPIs.

See: Rowley, D. J., Lujan, H. D., and Dolence, M. G., *Strategic Change in Colleges and Universities.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997.

The Self-Study Process

The self-study/framework for the strategic planning document was organized according to the NCA Criteria for Accreditation. Chapter Two provided the reader with an environmental scan; Chapters Three through Seven covered the NCA Criteria; and Chapter Eight included the College's vision for the year 2007–the Sinclair Learning Enterprise, the General Institutional Requirements, and the College's request for reaccreditation.

Each chapter was the product of collaboration among faculty, administrative, professional, support staff, and students of Sinclair Community College. Working as members of separate Criterion teams, these individuals reviewed, described, analyzed, and assessed NCA criteria according to the College's self-study/strategic planning model. The model consisted of three phases of activity–background, evaluation, and strategic planning. The specific activities of the model's three phases, which were also part of each criterion chapter, are summarized below.

In the **background phase,** College criterion committees and subcommittees reviewed the previous self-study/long-range plan and responded appropriately; prepared an overview of current programs, services, and activities; described major accomplishments, issues, concerns, and new initiatives since the previous self-study and long-range plan; and determined critical performance areas within each criterion.

The **evaluation phase** consisted of aligning the critical performance areas with the Institutional Effectiveness Model and Core Indicators. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), based in part on the NCA Patterns of Evidence, were developed for each of the critical performance areas. A PEST analysis, that evaluated **P**olitical, **E**conomic, **S**ocial, and **T**echnological trends and events, was used to increase understanding of the impact of these factors on the College's health and to ensure alignment with significant factors in the environment. A SWOT analysis was conducted during this phase to assess the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats related to each critical performance area. To facilitate SWOT analyses, committees sought participation from members of the Sinclair community knowledgeable about their criterion's critical performance areas. Participants received written information about the critical performance area they were reviewing. A cross-impact analysis of the SWOTs and the KPIs was also used to measure the impact of each strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat on each KPI. Once again, criterion committees and subcommittees sought out knowledgeable members of the Sinclair community as participants.

In the **strategic planning phase,** criterion committees and subcommittees used information from SWOTs, CIAs, and other input to generate ideas that would enhance institutional performance and to address the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats from the preceding phase. The ideas generated during this phase were evaluated against the KPIs using a cross-impact analysis. Finally, specific Strategic Planning Initiatives were formulated and processes defined to implement and monitor progress.

The Institutional Effectiveness Process

The NCA Self-Study Report contained a series of Strategic Planning Initiatives to serve as a framework for the development of a blueprint for the next several years and a guide for annual planning and budgeting. The Report also culminated in a description of the College's vision for 2007 and its Journey Toward Transformation, *The Sinclair Learning Enterprise.*

During the process of the North Central self-study, it became apparent that some very significant changes were underway at the College. New approaches to teaching and learning were emerging throughout the institution. These changes can best be described as focusing on Sinclair as a *learning college.* The self-study process suggested that if Sinclair's vision was to be pursued productively and efficiently, the learning college concept needed to be implemented in a thoughtful, organized, and strategic way.

Following completion of the NCA self-study process, the College engaged a consultant to design and facilitate a process that would result in a strategic plan with a clear and compelling focus and a process for implementation that builds campus-wide commitment and produces results. A Strategic Planning Team was appointed by the President and a sub-group (Design Team) worked with the consultant to finalize the agenda for two two-day planning workshops. Prior to the first workshop, the entire Strategic Planning Team convened to clarify the purpose of Sinclair's planning effort, develop a shared understanding of expected outcomes, and do some initial thinking about how the plan would be shared with the larger Sinclair community.

The focus of the first planning workshop was on strategy. The outcomes included defining a "preferred" future, establishing priority strategies and goals to reach that future, and determining leaders responsible for those strategies.

The second workshop addressed implementation—including the development of action plans for priority strategies that specified objectives and measurements related to Sinclair's Core Indicators of Effectiveness, the determination of initial anticipated resource requirements, the identification of ways to address structural obstacles, and the formulation of an implementation and review process.

The outcome of the workshops was a strategic plan and a set of integrated strategic initiatives that defined a clear and compelling focus for the next three years. The plan included a process for inviting input, gaining consensus, and building ownership across the College community.

The workshop process was designed on the basis of a process called Appreciative Inquiry, which focuses on valuing the best of "what is," envisioning "what might be," creating opportunities for dialogue about "what should be," and finally innovating "what will be."

Assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry

○ In every society, organization, or group, something works.

○ What we focus on becomes our reality.

○ Reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities.

○ The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.

○ People have more confidence and comfort to journey into the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).

○ If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.

○ It is important to value differences.

○ The language we use creates our reality.

Problem Solving	Appreciative Inquiry
Identification of problem: "Felt Need"	Appreciative: Valuing the best of "What is"
Analysis of Causes	Envisioning "What might be"
Analysis of Possible Solutions	Dialogue "What should be"
Action Planning: Treatment	Innovating: "What will be"
Basis Assumption: Organization is a problem to be solved	Basic Assumption: Organization is a mystery to be solved

See: Cooperrider, D. L. and Srivastva, S. "Appreciative Inquiry into Organizational Life." *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, Vol. 1, pp. 129-169, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1987.

The strategic initiatives provide the foundation for the bridge to Sinclair's future and are built on the principles of a learning college.

Principles of a Learning College

1. Creates substantive change in individual learners;
2. Engages learners in the learning process as full partners, assuming primary responsibility for their own choices;
3. Creates and offers as many options for learning as possible;
4. Assists learners in forming and participating in collaborative learning activities;
5. Defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners; and,
6. Succeeds only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for its learners.

See: O'Banion, *T. A Learning College for the 21st Century.* Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1997.

The plan is structured around three key questions:

- ○ What is the strategic initiative?
- ○ What will we measure (key performance indicators) to know the initiative has been achieved?
- ○ What changes are necessary (continuous improvement targets) to achieve the strategy?

The strategic initiatives concentrate on three critical areas of institutional performance where transformation must begin in order to sustain the learning college: student-centered learning and development, workforce development, and the "four R's" of internal change (reallocate, realign, reorganize, and reengineer).

Strategic planning began with the premise that planning is a learning process–one that is assessed based on performance. Eric Hoffer, the philosopher-dockworker, observed: *"In times of change, the learners will inherit the earth while the learned will find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists."* Sinclair is in the midst of change and opportunity. Creating a learning community where all students, faculty, and staff are workers and learners together will ensure a world-class educational opportunity.

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Chapter 2

Connecting the Disconnects:
Technology / Distance Education

CONNECTING
THE DISCONNECTS

104th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
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The Role of Technology in the Delivery of Educational Programs

Helen R. Connors

Today, more and more faculty are incorporating technology into the classroom and distance or distributed learning programs are increasing in number and becoming one of the most important new trends in education. Distance Learning most simply defined means anytime the students and the faculty are not physically in the same classroom at the same time. Distance learners are people who because of time, geographic, or other constraints choose not to attend a traditional classroom. The distance learning "fad" phenomenon has diminished. Distance learning is seen as a viable delivery alternative at many institutions, especially for reaching out to the growing numbers of students who, for a variety of reasons, would not attend traditional classrooms.

Distance learning is not new. It began with correspondence courses in the 1920s, followed by television courses in the 1960s, satellite courses in the 1970s, and computer-assisted instruction in the 1980s. In the 1990s, distance learning has evolved to include an extensive technological tool set that is increasing and expanding the resources as well as the opportunities that are available to learners and educational institutions. These delivery technologies can be mixed and matched and integrated into a medley of highly effective teaching and learning strategies. Of special interest is the merging of audio-video techniques, simulators, computers, and the Worldwide Web to create a powerful educational tool for learning.

These recent advances in telecommunication technologies are radically altering the world of education, greatly increasing the choices and opportunities for learners. Of unprecedented significance is the growing impetus for telecommunication technologies to empower geographically-isolated people, who traditionally do not have access to specialized training and higher education, to learn from experts or to achieve advanced degrees.

Telecommunications technologies are challenging academia to modify the way faculty teach and students learn. Traditional institutions and regulatory agencies must transform if they are going to achieve the fullest potential of the technology and meet the demands of lifelong learning. Institutions need to redesign learning experiences to reflect a shift from teaching content to assisting the learners to develop skills that enhance lifelong learning. This redesign requires a pedagogical and a paradigm shift from the teaching process to the learning process and from knowledge instruction to knowledge construction.

Creating the Infrastructure

Teaching successfully with technology requires establishing the infrastructure and creating the cultural environment that supports this paradigm shift. This calls for careful strategic planning on the part of the institution in order to provide a comprehensive planned approach and to assure that all investments in infrastructure, human resources, hardware, software, and skills are optimized, while redundancy and waste are minimized. For most, this means that within a given institution all units that deliver educational services to remote audiences must reach agreement on the strategies and technologies to be utilized in order to create economies of scale. In addition to establishing and maintaining the appropriate hardware, software, and connectivity for distance learning, students, faculty, curricula, and the institution must transition to accommodate this shift in educational delivery.

Student Issues

Technology-based education may not be appropriate for all students. It is important to recognize this fact and to advise students appropriately. To fare well in this learning environment students need to be self-directed, accountable, and responsible for their own learning as well as their own learning environment. They need to be serious about their education and career goals, and be intrinsically motivated to learn. Self-discipline is required in this non-traditional, less structured environment. Students must learn to set aside time in their busy schedules for learning activities. For the most part, students who choose distance learning will find that the technologies will enhance the learning process by empowering them to have greater control over the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Students will find that they can assess their own competencies and customize their learning environment to accommodate individual differences in goals, learning styles, and abilities. They may discover that they learn more easily, enjoyably, and successfully than ever before because they are more actively engaged in the learning process.

In addition to access to appropriate technology hardware and software, this new learning environment may require developing new skill sets and embracing new technologies. It also will require that the institutions develop support services to assist remote students to access resources necessary to provide seamless education. These services should include online registration, enrollment, and advisement, as well as online library access, textbook procurement, database searches, and student assistance. Other services to support distance students—such as adequate orientation to electronic education, ample technology infrastructure to support course and program design, and a plan for troubleshooting when problems arise—are essential to the success of the distance learning program.

Faculty Issues

There are no doubts that technology is dramatically reshaping faculty roles and work environment. In this new era, university teaching increasingly requires reaching across time and distance through online courses and "Virtual classrooms." Faculty, like students, need to change their teaching style, philosophy, and pedagogical approach. This is not an easy task because, currently, most educators are a product of traditional teaching and learning environments. Often, this means that faculty believe that students need to learn the same way that the faculty learned. Some faculty view this as a rite of passage, and there are few incentives for faculty to change this logic.

To be successful when teaching with technologies, faculty need to shift their approach from that of a "sage on the stage" to that of a "guide on the side." Their primary role is not to instruct but to facilitate students to learn and to construct new knowledge. In order to make this shift, faculty need to develop new teaching strategies and technical competencies. Even when partnered with technology experts for course development and implementation, faculty need a minimum set of technical competencies to produce quality courses and make good instructional design decisions. Technical competencies also will provide the faculty with a certain level of comfort when teaching online courses. These new competencies must be considered for developing existing faculty as well as for hiring new faculty. For the most part, faculty cannot develop these skills on their own; they must be given the time, technology resources, and support staff. Faculty need a strong support system in place to grow, gain satisfaction, and avoid feelings of alienation and isolation. External support without internal structural changes will not lead to successful implementation of a distance learning program. This is evidenced by the millions of dollars of grant funding that went to support development of computer assisted instruction in the 1980s with little impact on the long-term use of these technologies on a large scale.

Institutional Issues

No discussion of the issues facing faculty and institutions of higher education in the distance learning arena would be complete without addressing the questions of promotion and tenure, academic freedom, and intellectual property. Currently, the policies governing these areas of academia at most traditional institutions do not stretch far enough to include the development of course materials for online delivery. Promotion and tenure criteria are often inflexible, with an overemphasis on research as the only form of scholarship and an undervaluing of the teaching component of the threefold mission of higher education. In addition, distance learning takes the issues of academic freedom and intellectual property rights to a new level. In the past, professors prepared lectures, syllabi, and other course materials without concern about who owned them. Now, the uncertainty is that online courses and course materials do not fit into these existing university polices for intellectual property. Also, the laws governing copyright and ownership of scholarly materials are not much help, at this time. Institutions need to continue to look critically at the existing faculty reward system and policies regarding ownership of course materials. When necessary, these guidelines need to be modified to reflect the changing nature of higher education and the faculty work in relationship to distance learning. This challenge becomes even more complex as academic institutions begin to partner with private corporations to provide technology support for online learning.

Regulatory Issues

The use of advanced telecommunications technologies for distance learning present critical challenges for the regulatory community. The rapid pace of change in new educational delivery methods such as the Internet and multi-campus collaboration with interactive video technology has ramification for quality control issues in education. Although student experiences with tele-courses indicate that these technologies are living up to their educational promise, more research examining the outcomes of advanced telecommunications technologies on education, especially longitudinal studies tracking students and courses over time, are necessary in order to understand the various nuances of technology-based education. Barriers to distance learning, such as admissions criteria, residency requirements, and availability of financial aid, need to be examined in order to create a seamless educational system with no difference between distance and traditional education. Differences in standards connote differences in value.

Summary and Conclusions

Telecommunication technologies should not drive the educational changes but rather should provide a learning-vision pull that has the potential to enhance and extend education to a variety of learners. The intent of distance education programs should be to provide increased *access* to *quality* education at affordable *costs* through the appropriate use of technologies. In all likelihood, technologies and innovative learning strategies for education present a great deal of challenges, obstacles, and opportunities.

To be on the cutting edge, educators are being asked to make a major paradigm shift even when outcomes are not known with certainty in advance. Continued research effort is essential to evaluate quality and the appreciation of the learning environment, as well as the reliability of the technology.

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Developing Distance Education Programs/Courses for Web-Based Delivery

Tom Seymour
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Distance education programs can open access to college offerings and degree programs by making education available anytime, anywhere in the world. The potential of online programs is strong and the technological paths on the information superhighway are open. This also brings new options and experiences for teaching and learning. The implementation of these programs requires teachers and students to approach and carry out their objectives in entirely new and creative ways. The change from a traditional system of education to one that encapsulates learning in a computer screen also promises to make exceptional transitional demands on faculties and students (Koohang and Durante, 1998)

A web-based instruction program, like a classroom program, requires a synergy of elements, brought together through collaboration among units across the institution. A balance of five major program components developed specifically for the online medium is essential to deliver a quality program. These include (1) curriculum and instruction; (2) assessment and evaluation; (3) library and learning resources; (4) student services; and (5) facilities and fiscal support (NCA's "Guidelines for Distance Education," March 1997). This paper will provide an overview of the considerations that are inherent in the collaborative activity that make it possible to address the five components.

Introductory Issues

It may seem that the lion's share of online program development falls within the academic arena as faculty and administrators work to ensure that the integrity of the academic program is maintained online. The very issues of teaching and learning that are at the heart of discourse for classes on campus should be at the core of online program development. However, academic preparation cannot stand apart in this medium since its success will also rely on strong services from the technical area of the institution, sound fiscal and infrastructure support and planning from administration, and creative adaptation of services for distance learners from the student personnel unit. An online education team is required to carry out this comprehensive effort.

While we emphasize the collaborative aspect of this enterprise, we will address the critical issues to be considered by each of the team members individually, illustrating as we go along where the association among units is most prominent. These critical issues also can serve as a basis for evaluation as institutions determine whether they are ready to launch online courses and programs delivered via the Internet.

The Five Program Components

☐ **Curriculum and instruction**

- ◇ **Program and course integrity.** With the collaborative nature of online program design understood, faculty still maintain responsibility for curriculum design and content in their disciplines or fields. To assure integrity of online delivery, full-time faculty from the appropriate departments should be central to the management and coordination of their courses and programs.

This oversight responsibility must be supported. Technical staff are key to assisting the development of course design, including student assessment tools, data collection, course archiving, and evaluation. Together the academic (including library) and technical areas must work to facilitate the means for ongoing review so that course resources are current. Technical staff minimally should include an instructional technology director or coordinator, a webmaster, and a systems administrator who work closely with faculties and library staff.

It is obvious that budgetary support must be in place for technical development. But budgets must also consider the compensation of faculty and staff overload effort to bring about this new approach to education.

◇ **Faculty preparation.** Faculty training must occur on an ongoing basis. Professional development funds should be earmarked specifically to support beginners and enhance the development of veterans.

◇ **Communication.** The challenge in adaptation or development of new programs for the online medium is based in communication. The productive ongoing engagement of the learner in the online course is the most critical element in program and instructional design. Consistency of methods and software helps to anchor the student to the program and facilitate movement through the curriculum. No matter how expert at the computer one may be, the learner—and often the instructor—experiences a high level of anxiety at the outset of an online course. Setting expectations and meeting them early on and consistently will allow the program to move forward productively with effort spent on teaching and learning. In general, the online course tends to rely heavily on language. The written word is at the center of most courses—even those that are designed with virtual labs or that extensively incorporate video and sound.

The integration of the student into a community of online learners must have a classroom home base, that is, the place where the course can be carried out. In asynchronous models, a well-proven method is the Discussion Forum. This is a more advanced version of billboard posting or threaded discussion methods. Current discussion software provides a web location for instructor and students to carry on class discussion. The Forum allows for new topics to be introduced as side discussions, for helpful information to be posted by students, and for "guest speakers" to drop in to elaborate on the conversation.

The technical features of the Forum that enhance this communication tool are: (1) private reading topics areas; (2) user self-registration (all can set their own passwords); (3) automatic archiving and pruning by conversation length; (4) manual archiving and pruning by date; (5) message editing; (6) message queuing; (7) backup; (8) attachment uploading and e-mail notification enhancements; (9) log analysis tools; (10) message management tools; (11) keyword search and new message search; (12) simple and understandable user interface.

E-mail is also useful for private messaging. E-mail listserver makes small group projects possible. Course designs that allow for synchronous communication may use teleconferencing or chat rooms.

◇ **Online community.** Community building is a vital element because it contributes to the retention of students. It also helps ensure the integrity of online student work and the credibility of the degrees and credits the institution awards. This can be enhanced with the use of residency periods during which students and faculty are physically together before and after the term.

◇ **Appropriate technology.** Though online courses may begin quite simply, state-of-the-art equipment is necessary. The institution must have a reliable server that can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All involved must be outfitted with hardware and software tools that make it possible for them to meet the objectives assigned.

◇ **External validation.** This must be obtained via advisory boards for programs, faculty colleagues at other institutions, and various state agencies and accrediting bodies in institution's service areas.

☐ Evaluation and assessment

In general, assessment of student achievement in any course is tightly linked to stated objectives. Instruction generally is evaluated for its efficiency in getting as many students as possible to master as many objectives as possible. In online courses, evaluation must include this; but it also must examine the effectiveness of the course design, the use of technology in helping students learn, the management of the instructor's time, and, of course, student feedback. Based on the results of evaluation, the instructor and technical experts may modify the objectives, and/or delivery procedures, as needed. These are considered individually below.

- ◇ **Beginnings.** Understanding that assessment begins at the time the student presents himself or herself for admission or registration, a comprehensive plan for assessment of student achievement must be articulated and operational for online programs. In general, online students should meet the same admissions requirements and undergo the same admissions processes as students who select a traditional format. In this process, information presented to the students about online education should include full disclosure regarding admissions standards and the support services they will receive. This work usually comes from a partnership among the registrar area, the enrollment management office, student services, and academic departments.

- ◇ **Student achievement.** A system of multiple measures to assess student learning outcomes must be applied to online courses. This begins with clearly stated instructional objectives written in behavioral terms. Each one should define what learning the student is to demonstrate, the level of acceptable performance, and the means of evaluation. In online courses, objectives may integrate course content and development of technical or related abilities. For example, an objective for a course in English might focus on students demonstrating writing skills. The objective also might include demonstrating mastery in the use of citations for online sources.

  Online courses can provide for pre-tests or other diagnostic instruments used to assess students' abilities. These, along with post-tests and tests of content, can be embedded into the course web site through interactive forms. The students fill out an online form and send it back either to the instructor for review or to an automated grading system that can give immediate feedback. Either method provides an excellent means for a formative assessment process and encourages students to challenge themselves, rather than compete for grades.

  Other types of assessment of student learning may be developed from the process of the course. The contribution students make to the discussion forums can be collected and reviewed for progress and growth over time. For online teaching, this type of student assessment is strongly encouraged as the centerpiece of the mix of multiple measures that may be used.

  The necessary emphasis on written communication in an online course is the vehicle for much of the students' learning. To dismiss this as a viable source of evidence of achievement may omit important learning considerations on the behalf of the students.

- ◇ **Course evaluation.** Similarly, course evaluation must use multiple measures. End-of-course student evaluations, annual course reviews by the faculty member in charge of online courses, and department or college curriculum committees and institutional academic planning committees are all essential elements of the whole evaluative picture.

- ◇ **Technical tools.** Network tools should be used to allow the institution to monitor student participation and determine the origin of a login or file presumed to be from a student. Vocal contact and teleconferences allow faculty to query students on assignments and readings. Residency activities allow for personal assessment of student performance. The tools that collect and maintain a history of the course progress have benefits for course evaluation. Instructors can evaluate the progress of the course and continue to develop their instructional designs and formats for future delivery.

☐ **Library and learning resources**

- ◇ **Access to sources.** The Internet itself is rich with sites providing valid and reliable academic resources for student use. In addition, the institution should provide for access to a specified online library resource. Many institutions offer dial-up or Internet access to their own libraries. At the outset, information must be provided on how to access the library databases (both internal and external) and how to use them effectively. Online students should be able to request materials online, by phone, or by fax.

- ◇ **Help.** Provision should be made for students to access a real or virtual librarian to assist their searches for information and resources.

☐ **Student services**

- ◇ **Privileges.** Online students should have the same privileges as the traditional students to use the institution's support services. This can be accomplished in several ways. Links to online resources might be made available to serve some needs. Students may go directly to the links or be directed to them following communication with a student affairs staff or faculty member.

- ◇ **Information.** Among the most important of student services is the provision of information that assists students in pursuing not only their academic objectives but also other support areas. All online students must be provided a document that outlines the standards for online programs

- ◇ **Services.** All online students should be eligible for the following services and programs at no cost: new student orientation; student activities; programs and events; career development programs and services, e.g., career decisions, resumes, credential files, interviewing, networking and job search techniques; coordination of services for students with special needs; crisis intervention and counseling referral; problem identification and problem management; student advocacy with the institution's departments in response to concerns such as grade appeals, financial aid, and sexual harassment; health information and services on a range of wellness concerns, as well as maintenance of immunization records and health insurance information. Much of this can be accomplished through online information pages. Students, however, still must have access to staff via e-mail or telephone.

- ◇ **Advising.** The academic advising and delivery of the course materials must be accomplished through the online program's faculty members or faculty coordinators. The faculty online program manager oversees student complaints and forwards them to the appropriate departments for immediate action.

☐ **Facilities and fiscal support**

- ◇ **Institutional commitment.** A senior-level institutional commitment is required for online programs to be effective. The institution's long range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes must reflect the facilities, staffing, equipment, and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of our distance education programs. These should be presented in current and ongoing strategic planning efforts at the college and institutional levels. Planning activities for online programs should be supplemented by annual budgeting procedures. The institution should be committed to upgrading its hardware and software on an ongoing basis without reservation.

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University-Based Web Conferencing to Connect Pre-College Teachers in a Technology Curriculum Integration Project

Gwen Hillesheim
Lee H. Ehman

Introduction

The Teacher Institute for Curriculum Knowledge about Integration of Technology (TICKIT) is a yearlong, school-based professional development program, based at Indiana University in Bloomington. It involves 25 teachers from all grade levels in five rural, southern Indiana school districts. Each teacher develops and teaches a curriculum unit involving use of technology during each of the two semesters. In addition, the teams of five teachers in each district carry out a separate, yearlong project to influence technology awareness and use by colleagues in their schools. While there are three two-day workshops at the university during the year, most of the teachers' work in TICKIT occurs in their schools, with TICKIT staff visiting schools and conducting workshops on technology use in teaching at the request of the teachers. Three graduate credit hours are awarded for each semester's accomplishments.

As part of the effort to promote peer communication and support, a web-based asynchronous conferencing system (COW), is used by all teachers to post progress reports about their projects in the first of a two-week cycle. During the second week each teacher reacts, with commentary, criticisms, and suggestions, to the progress reports of a "critical friend" with whom she or he is paired. TICKIT staff members add reactions, suggestions, and encouragement regarding the online discourse about project reports and critical friend exchanges. The conferencing also fosters communication among the teams of five teachers regarding their yearlong projects.

This paper will describe the purposes and structure of the conferencing system, present findings and interpretations from analysis of the teachers' postings, and draw conclusions and implications for higher educators engaged in school-based professional development.

Purposes and Structure of Web Conferencing in TICKIT

The COW conferencing has three main purposes for its teacher participants. First, the requirement that they post ideas about their work each week (alternating between progress reports to all 25 teachers and commentary only between the critical friend pairs) is intended to keep them focused on their projects rather than ignoring them in favor of other teaching demands. Second, the critical friend exchanges are a source of ideas for and validation of their own projects. Third, the electronic exchanges are an attempt to bring a heightened sense of professional connection and lessening of isolation, and to enlist them as colleagues and mentors of teachers from other schools.

In order to accomplish these purposes, the COW conferencing system was structured into various topics, permitting teachers to post and read the items required by the TICKIT program, as well as ideas that were optional. Table 1 shows the categories of these topics, along with the numbers of postings in each for the fall 1998 semester.

Table 1

Conference Topic Categories and Posting Frequencies During Fall Semester

Topic Category	Number of Posts in Topic Category
Workshop interactions (introductions, practice with COW)	55
Updates from TICKIT staff	5
Within-school team interactions	32
Individual project progress reports	152
Critical friend interactions [private]	185
Reading reations	48
Total posts	477

- The *workshop interactions* topic provided TICKIT teachers and staff the opportunity to learn and practice using the COW system during their two-day workshop in mid-August. Each teacher posted at least two items: an introduction and an entry regarding ideas gained from workshop activities, and these constitute the 55 posts in the first category.

- There were communications to the teachers from the project staff about various expectations, assignments, and modifications throughout the semester, and most often they were made through direct e-mail. However, in five instances the *TICKIT staff* also posted this information on COW to ensure receipt by all participants.

- A total of 32 *within-school team* posts were made in four of the five school district teams (one school did not use this method of communication.) This averages to be a modest 8 posts per team, and clearly the team members used face-to-face, phone, and e-mail methods much more often than electronic conferencing.

- *Progress reports* and critical friend reactions, two of the three required categories for the teachers, constituted the majority of postings during the semester. Two teachers dropped out of the program shortly after the semester began for personal reasons, and one of the remaining 23 did not post progress reports or critical friend interactions because of lack of a classroom or home computer and Internet access. Each teacher was required to make at least five postings in each of the two categories, where for progress reports all participants could read them, but for critical friend exchanges only the two teachers plus the TICKIT staff had access to the posts. The 22 teachers averaged about seven posts in both the progress reports and critical friend topics. (In the latter category, the TICKIT staff made three "encouragement and reaction" posts to each critical friend pair for a total of 32 during the period.)

- The final category, *reading reactions,* involved two required posts by each teacher in which they wrote a two or three paragraph reaction to articles about curriculum integrating of technology. A corollary assignment was for each person in the critical friend pairs to comment critically on the other's reading reaction; however, for some reason, perhaps lack of assignment clarity or lack of time, only nine of the 23 teachers actually made those posts in the critical friend topic.

Findings and Interpretations

Having described briefly the COW conference topic categories and frequencies of postings within them during the first semester of the TICKIT program, I now turn to a qualitative analysis and interpretation of the contents of the participants' postings. Rather than considering the content within the conference topics, the two main categories of project progress reports and critical friend interchanges are combined to draw out meanings from the teachers' ideas and feelings expressed electronically. These are reported in six categories.

1. **Project reporting, focusing and modifying.** As required, nearly all teachers reported every two weeks on progress made, plans laid, and problems encountered while working on their classroom projects. In addition to this primary descriptive material, teachers also sometimes gave reasons for modifying their plans as they addressed unforeseen problems.

   As the semester progressed, one trend that emerged was that several teachers began addressing their critical friend directly in the progress reports, rather than writing for all participants, as the staff had originally envisioned. It was apparent that for these pairs of teachers a more personal audience was preferable to writing generally to all teachers in the program. Related to this is the growing tendency for critical friends to begin or end their posts with personal information and questions, clearly in an attempt to establish social conversation in addition to the professional dimension of the conferencing.

2. **Praise and encouragement.** The critical friends interactions nearly always included some element of praise and encouragement for the other's work. Near the beginning of the semester this tended to be superficial, consisting of a few words or a couple of sentences. However, as time went on, the praise and encouragement became more extended, not just in length, but in kind. This extended encouragement often came in response to problems the other had reported, and an important way it was extended was for the writer to relate the problem or experience to her or his own ideas or experiences. For example, in response to critical friend's explanation of a lack of computer laboratory time for her class, the teacher might compare her situation to her own, and encourage her to work through the problem.

3. **Reports of impact on projects of added resources.** Throughout the semester teachers reported and discussed how additional resources added to their ability to complete their projects successfully. This information sharing sometimes sparked thinking in others about how similar resources, perhaps not previously considered, might benefit their own work.

   The range of added resources included: Internet connectivity; new software or hardware; training received either from a colleague or technology coordinator in individual or group settings, or from the TICKIT staff during in-school workshops; and teaming with another teacher on a project (there were only two teacher pairs that reported this as a helpful resource.)

4. **Review of what teachers accomplished and learned.** One notable dimension of the COW posts was teachers "celebrating" their accomplishments and the fact that they were learning new knowledge and skills. Three subcategories of these celebratory messages were: learning to use a particular technology tool in their teaching; particular successes in creating and implementing parts of their classroom projects; and using student actions and feedback to illustrate the impact teachers were having through their curriculum technology integration work.

   There was a sense of professional pride in many of these communications of success; some teachers clearly wanted someone to tell but lacked a colleague or friend who would really understand the victory. TICKIT colleagues, especially critical friends, were likely to grasp their importance, and were a ready and often sympathetic audience. There are many critical friend posts with acknowledgments and praise of the other's celebration in a previous post.

5. **Idea engagement among critical friends.** This strong dimension was sometimes related to the teachers' projects, and sometimes not. At times the ideas being discussed were not related to teaching at all, although pedagogical ideas tended to dominate. A more important distinction among the engagement with ideas is between one-way discussion of ideas, where only one of the two in the pair really carries the intellectual burden, and the other is mainly a listener, and reciprocal discussion, where the two are more equal in their contributions.

   Ideas were presented in four different forms during the online conferencing. In the first form, questions and answers were used by a majority of critical friend pairs as a means for addressing mostly project-related issues. In one instance a teacher used a set of questions to herself to engage in thinking about needed considerations for her project (she then proceeded to analyze possible answers!) The second form compared the other's ideas or experiences to one's own situation or experience, often including some dimension or idea not included in the other's communication, perhaps as a way to suggest new thinking by the other teacher. The third category analyzed existing or anticipated problems–sometimes one's own and sometimes the other's. There was a considerable amount of this kind of discourse. Finally, and related to problem analysis, was actual assistance with ideas for solving problems, modifying approaches to parts of projects, or simply giving information. In this final category assistance was both asked for and offered. It was not always possible to tell whether the assistance in the form of these ideas actually helped, but there were several instances in which the person receiving the assisting ideas acknowledged them and explained how they were put to use in their project. There were also cases in which a person shared another's ideas with a third colleague for use in their classroom. This is an important example of the potential for electronic conferencing to have an impact beyond just those posting and reading.

6. **Feelings expression.** There was an unexpected amount of feelings of various kinds expressed electronically. One dimension of feeling was excitement and pleasure conveyed about accomplishments. This often (but not always) accompanied the "celebrations," or listing of what was learned, discussed above.

   Another aspect of feelings was expression of frustration. Important in these instances were complaints about lack of time to work on projects, or even to post brief messages on the COW conference. Like any teacher who volunteers for a new program, and especially those trying to learn to apply new technology to their classrooms, these teachers were pressed to fit everything, new and old, into their already full professional and personal lives. "Time is the enemy," one seasoned veteran bemoaned. Another source of frustration was the many technical problems encountered through the semester. Things sometimes just didn't work. Related to that is a third major problem teachers complained about–some had to wait for as long as two months to have Internet connectivity for the school computer they depended upon for COW postings and project work in spite of their school's pledge to provide connectivity at the beginning of the school year. Finally, the COW structure and expectations bedeviled a few of the teachers, particularly during the first month, and that was an initial frustration that made its way into the conference postings.

   A striking part of the feelings expressed between critical friends was sympathy and empathy for the other's problems and frustrations. Many times a teacher replied to her frustrated colleague that she had a similar or identical problem, and she knew just how the other felt. "Misery loves company," as one participant put it.

   Some teachers also expressed feelings of inadequacy about their knowledge and skill in using technology in preparing instruction or actually teaching in their classrooms. This was somewhat surprising, given the self-selected nature of the participants in TICKIT, all of whom, in their applications to be in the program, had written statements indicating substantial computer experience and competence.

   Finally, there was a minor undercurrent of guilt in the posts, both regarding lack of progress on their classroom projects, and being tardy in making the required posts in COW.

Discussion and Implications

Drawing back from the analysis of COW contents, several important issues come into focus. First, use of the critical friend device seemed to work well to cement the exchange of ideas about and mutual support of teachers' classroom projects. Further, it was seen that the teachers tended to prefer more personal, one-on-one, electronic conversations rather than simply broadcasting reports and observations to their large group of peers in the program. This has implications for how such online conferencing is structured, and what expectations project staff might have for participation. While the TICKIT teachers did broadcast progress reports to all in the program, most wanted a person, not a group, as an audience. Establishing devices like the critical friend pairs used in this project is one way to accommodate to that preference, and increase the level and quality of participation in the electronic communications.

Also apparent from the frequency data in Table 1, if participants lack a structure of clear expectations and requirements for using web-based conferencing, they tend not to use it. The three required categories of Table 1–progress reports, critical friend interactions, and article reactions–constitute the bulk of the posts. There were several other categories and subcategories set up for optional use, but they were seldom used. The implication for program staff is clear. Don't assume that participants will use the conference tool if there is not a clear use for it, particularly if they are severely constrained by time demands for doing other things. Providing a useful structure, clear expectations, and a sense of value, are important issues to address.

Very little teacher-teacher interaction was found outside the critical friend topic. That is, there was nearly no "lurking"—a teacher reading other teachers' progress reports (other than her or his critical friend's), or the posts among a school's team, and commenting on them. Only two of the 22 teachers participating in COW were obviously lurking, and this petered out halfway through the semester. One reason for this is the sheer number of postings that accumulates, combined with the individual teacher's lack of time. Unless there is a specific reason, including an assignment or other specific expectation, busy teachers are unlikely to jump outside their regular conference reading and initiate new conversations.

The range and extent of feelings expressed in the postings were unexpected. While electronic conferencing requires precious time that many of our TICKIT teachers lacked, many still used COW as an outlet to show their excitement, pleasure, frustration, and even guilt about various aspects of their work. In reflecting on this finding, it seems clear that a need was being met, albeit an unanticipated one. It might be that this aspect should be built into the conference expectations and training from the beginning, rather than have project staff simply assume it might work out as a benefit to the teachers. The education profession is full of important feelings. The implication is to incorporate this into the electronic conferencing of teachers, promoting ventilation, sharing, and often celebration of their feelings. Therefore, sharing both feelings and ideas should be considered in the creation of structures and expectations for these conferences.

Finally, it is important to return to the three original goals of the COW conference as it was used in the TICKIT program. It is impossible to determine if the first goal, keeping the teachers on task with their classroom projects, really was promoted by teachers' participation. The fact is that all completed their projects; the most that can be said is that it didn't seem to hurt them. The second goal, that teachers use the COW exchanges as a source of ideas and validation for their projects, seems to have been accomplished at least for some of the critical friend pairs, because of the explicit acknowledgment and use of ideas offered during the electronic exchanges. The third goal, heightening sense of professional connection and lessening of isolation, also appears to have been accomplished. Critical friend pairs exchanged ideas, feelings, praise, and encouragement. Some teachers seemed to be reaching out to a colleague electronically in a way not available to her down the hall, at least in the sense that these ideas and feelings would be completely understood and appreciated by a local colleague. TICKIT colleagues shared things that teachers next door did not and therefore online conferencing appeared to add valuable connections to most of the teachers' professional lives.

If this analysis is valid, then it is clear that web-based conferencing is a valuable tool to enhance professional communication among pre-college teachers in university-based professional development programs.

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Transition Through Technology

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Introduction

Pine Technical College has several programs unique to the Minnesota State College and University system (MnSCU), and it is located in a geographic region rich in technology resources. The college has a long history of leadership in the implementation of technology and a reputation in the state for creativity and innovation. It was one of the first postsecondary institutions in Minnesota to use interactive television for course delivery and served as a pilot for the implementation of the Minnesota State College and University (MnSCU)/PALS Library Automation Project. The college has experienced a major technology transition during the years 1994 though 1998 by an infusion and use of technology that has transformed the college.

During the five-year transition period, Pine Technical College has been awarded several small state grants and an *Electronic Academy* grant. These grant dollars have allowed us to expand technologically and to increase the use of technology by our faculty and staff. Transition efforts of the college faculty have been directed toward the use of electronic delivery methods in the curriculum and toward creating a presence for the college on the Worldwide Web. Through these grant dollars and continuing efforts of faculty in the use of technology, the transition has spilled into other areas of the college as well. These initial grant dollars have provided the means for the college to improve access and technology in several unique technical and human service programs.

Setting the Stage

The delivery of Pine Technical College's unique programs and services to meet the demands of a broader market are in direct response to student, faculty, employer, and Minnesota needs. Using information technology and electronic instructional delivery is a concept that links students, faculty, and employers to resources, mentors, and technical networks not often found in small, rural communities. Instructors trained in electronic delivery and multi-media classroom environments that facilitate the use of information age technology are critical to student success.

Early in 1994, a small cohort group of faculty and administrators interested in technology came together to form the first college Technology Committee. This group recognized the value of distance education and saw the use of technology as a key component to move the college into the Information Technology Era. This committee sought and found grant funding to provide dollars to support the efforts and technology activities of this small group. During 1994 through 1995, the faculty and other college staff had the opportunity to apply for these Instructional Technology Mini-Grants. All grant recipients were charged with championing and presenting their completed technology projects to an all-college audience at workshops and advisory committee meetings during the fall of 1995.

Infusion of Technology

Prior to award of the *Electronic Academy* grant in 1996, five faculty and three college staff members received Instructional Technology Mini-Grant dollars. Faculty and staff projects included enhanced instructional delivery through the use of presentation software, conversion of paper classroom handouts and graphics to an electronic filing system, exploration of publisher CD-ROMs for developmental instruction, and instructor-developed course materials using authoring software. Technology equipment such as multi-media work stations, networking and server equipment, and multi-media software were purchased as well. The college already had a distance learning infrastructure in the form of interactive television classrooms.

Upon the award of the *Electronic Academy* grant, an all college technology survey was competed by 29 out of 55 staff and faculty in early 1996. This paper survey asked respondents to identify current levels of personal computer (PC) and technology skills. While 100% of the respondents used a PC at work, very few indicated a high level of experience and/or use of the following computer/classroom technology tools. The survey provided the following anecdotal information:

- 14% identified themselves as experienced users of word processing software
- 10% identified themselves as experienced users of e-mail
- 6% identified themselves as experienced users of the Internet
- 20% used presentation software
- 10% used the network to distribute course materials
- 0% belonged to listserves and newsgroups
- 20% used portable multi-media carts
- 20% used multi-media classrooms
- 20% used ITV/distance learning

The areas of technological need identified by the survey respondents included: (1) more computers for students; (2) access to networked e-mail; (3) Internet access; (4) a technology resource support person/persons; (5) increased staff development opportunities for faculty to improve instructional technology skills; and (6) expanded computer access, software, hardware, and training.

College and State Planning

In July of 1995 the now established Pine Technical College Technology Committee, key faculty, staff, and college administration met for an intensive planning session to identify the future direction of the college. The resulting process brought together more than 20 individuals from both within and outside the college for a three-day planning retreat. Under the leadership of a professional facilitator the planning group put together the college *Strategic Plan for Applied Technology.* During the same time frame key people in the Minnesota State College and University (MnSCU) system were making plans to provide technology grants to assist system colleges with the expectation that Minnesota would become a leader in educational technology. MnSCU had the vision to establish an *Electronic Academy,* a grant initiative designed to improve student access to higher education and provide students "with new, exciting educational and training options." The three-year grant initiative had four components:

- New ventures
- Electronic classrooms
- Distance learning
- Electronic services and Infrastructure

Pine Technical College applied for and received *Electronic Academy* grant dollars during 1996 through 1998. The new grant dollars allowed five programs to continue technology transition efforts in the technical, human services, and special needs areas. As faculty worked to improve access and expand delivery of their curriculum via distance learning, the *Electronic Academy* grant provided funds to allow first time delivery of: (1) online courses; (2) shared programming utilizing the college's interactive television (ITV) system to provide human services faculty the opportunity to share and deliver core courses across the state; and (3) the first of its kind delivery of special education courses via interactive television (ITV) to enhance school-to-work, social integration, and transition issues for persons with disabilities in the east central region of Minnesota.

Transition Efforts

The *Electronic Academy* grant dollars allowed the college to step up its pace in use of new technology and to offer incentives in support of innovative change in curriculum delivery using multi-media applications. Various software packages and computer projection equipment for electronic classroom instruction were purchased early on, and a college Authoring Center was developed to provide a technology rich environment to support staff and faculty forays into the Information Age. Staff development opportunities and activities were critical to this process. Key staff development activities included: (1) a faculty instructional design course for delivering curriculum over the Internet; (2) Teleconference series on copyright, fair-use, licensing, and intellectual property rights; and (3) in-house workshops on multi-media applications, electronic classrooms, and software applications. Grant dollars were also used as stipends for faculty-driven projects, and in-house technology support personnel were hired to assist faculty and staff in completing instructional technology projects. ***By the end of the Electronic Academy grant in the fall of 1998, 61% of the college faculty had participated in technology grant projects.***

Electronic Academy Grant Outcomes

Over the last few years, Pine Technical College has moved forward in several primary goal areas. First, the college has improved the learning environment for students by providing a faculty skilled in technologically advanced instructional methodologies, curriculum and instructional design, and effective applications of technology. Second, the college has enhanced student learning via access to electronic tools such as digital courseware, Internet browsers, video desktop conferencing, and multi-media classroom environments. Third, by increasing access to information and connectivity with other higher education information systems, Pine Technical College's students and faculty have an electronic information-based learning environment. Finally, by increased access to, and exchange of information with, other higher education institutions, Pine Technical College better serves students, faculty, staff, and residents of east central Minnesota and the state.

True Transformation

1998 proved to be a benchmark year for the college. We now have web pages for each program and department at Pine Technical College, and an active Intranet (test site of web directory). The college made a major leap into applied technology and instructional delivery when four of our programs embraced the required use of student laptops for electronic delivery of curriculum during the fall semester of 1998. The use of laptops by the students enrolled in these programs truly pushed the college into a new instructional era. Our interactive television classrooms are ported for laptop usage, as are several other rooms across the campus. Classrooms are upgraded to have networked computers, providing students the first generation of "smart classrooms." Students and instructors are regular users of Internet, e-mail, computer based teaching and learning, chat rooms, and a wide array of information technology. It has changed student and instructor college life dramatically.

At the end of the *Electronic Academy* grant, the need for an all-college technology survey surfaced again. This time the survey was sent via e-mail to faculty and staff in January of 1999. The technology survey was competed by 19 out of 75 staff and faculty on January 19, 1996. This e-mail survey asked respondents to identify current levels of personal computer (PC) and technology skills.

- 100% used a PC at work
- 82% identified themselves as experienced users of word processing software
- 78% identified themselves as experienced users of e-mail
- 52% identified themselves as experienced users of the Internet
- 36% used presentation software
- 36% used the network to distribute course materials
- 52% belonged to listserves and newsgroups
- 36% used portable multi-media carts
- 42% used multi-media classrooms
- 57% used ITV/Distance Learning

The areas of technological need identified by respondents in 1999 included: (1) staff development opportunities for faculty or staff to improve instructional technology skills; (2) faculty time to develop additional ITV/Internet courses; (3) online registration and book purchasing; (4) purchase of new software and hardware to move forward; (5) faculty champions; (6) curriculum integrity; (7) strategic planning; (8) better use of low end technology, such as e-mail, a telephone system for registration, etc.

Looking Forward

Pine Technical College's continuing commitment to the vision of the *Electronic Academy* initiative is in the exchange of information with other regional higher educational institutions on teaching, learning, and instructional delivery technologies used in the classroom. Our college carries a strong tradition of collaboration and partnership with other higher education institutions to provide improved service to students and residents of east central Minnesota and the state. Critical to the success of future technology efforts is the provision of a framework and a support system for planning educational use of information resources and technology in the region.

The college is entering into the second generation of distance education delivery with its networking and communications structure. As we move into the future, the use of uncompressed digital fiber optics; DS3 lines; and video, audio, and data routers will enable the transformation of the college to a "Campus without Walls" to continue. Pine Technical College will be involved in a regional cooperative approach to the electronic delivery of services, training, and best practices by means of a new $1.4 million grant for central Minnesota that will result in the creation of a *"Virtual Technology Center"* for the region.

We continue to engage in strategic planning for applied technology and electronic education. Institution wide planning to pursue grants and funding to enhance instructional technology and distance education projects is in progress now. Our college leadership, faculty, staff, and students are responsive to futuristic trends in technology, and we recognize the use of information and technology as a key component of the future growth of Pine Technical College. The college perseveres in its efforts to "Transition through Technology" by an all-college commitment and enthusiasm for integration of instructional technology methods into the curriculum by faculty champions, staff, students, and administration. We look forward to the next five years and the innovation, acceleration, and utilization of new technology and the challenges that will come to Pine Technical College as we work toward our vision of a "Campus without Walls."

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The Use of Web-Based Technology in the Student Outcomes Assessment Self-Study Process

Virginia L. Lussier
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Introduction

In recent years, institutions of higher education have experienced pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of their academic programs both from organizations external to the campus as well as those internal to it. Outcomes assessment of student learning has given us one essential tool to respond to those demands; to strengthen fulfillment of our institutional mission and educational goals; to prepare our graduates to reach their potential; and to be better prepared to contribute to family, community, profession, and nation.

Increasingly institutions are using web sites to inform the university community and its various publics about their efforts to assess student learning. Typically, this information includes a student outcomes assessment (SOA) task force report, campus assessment philosophy and goals, results of various assessment surveys, tools and techniques of assessment, available print materials, and Internet resources. Sites vary in their quality. Some contain very useful information about student outcomes assessment. However, only a few institutional web sites provide the actual assessment plans developed in various majors.

Reasons for Developing Automated Student Outcomes Assessment Plans

At Saint Louis University we wanted to make the discipline-specific, student outcome assessment plans available on the Internet for four reasons. First, the Internet permits an organized method for presenting a vast array of information. Saint Louis University is a comprehensive university with almost 175 majors at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (distributed almost equally between both levels), including the customary arts and sciences disciplines as well as professional education such as social work, law, and medicine. Saint Louis University has enumerated 23 assessment goals. The University not only has the typical knowledge and skills goals found at most institutions but, as a Catholic, Jesuit institution, it is also concerned with formation of students' ethical principles, recognition of the spiritual self, service to others, and social justice. The array of undergraduate and graduate majors, the vast number of goals for possible assessment, the need for discipline-specific information, and the desire for consistency necessitated the need for an organized, uniform presentation.

Second, we wanted to ensure that faculty and staff had access to assessment information. We wanted them to be knowledgeable not only about their own discipline assessment plan but also about other plans in their college and across the University. The availability of other additional information about assessment designs could help all disciplines enhance the future development of their assessment plans.

Third, we wanted an approach that would enable individual academic departments to post their assessment plans to a web site utilizing a uniform presentation. Entering information once would save typing time, reduce data errors, and eliminate possible misinterpretation of program plans.

Finally, we sought a final product of high quality. We wanted information displayed in a way that is readily accessible to the reader. We desired a product of which we would be proud and that would contain information other institutions would find useful. Just as we had learned from the work of others, we wanted others to benefit from our efforts.

Design of the Web-Based Forms

Our design work was guided by the assessment process, the complexity of our task, and available resources. The number of undergraduate and graduate majors (175) plus the number of goals (23) and possible objectives within each goal (5) made the design work enormously challenging for us. We implemented a five-part work plan to design our web-based forms. The five parts consist of the assessment process, the planning phase, the submission form, the help page, and the cover page.

◇ **The assessment process.** The student outcomes assessment process at Saint Louis University consists of seven basic steps: (1) the selection of goals for assessment; (2) the selection of objectives to be assessed for each goal; (3) the selection of assessment measures and methods; (4) the selection of performance criteria for each objective; (5) collection, analyses, and interpretation of data; (6) comparison of results with performance criteria to determine if goals and objectives have been achieved; and (7) changes to be made, if any, in the curriculum/academic activities to ensure continuous improvement. These seven steps constitute the basis of the electronic submission form. The seven-step process is automated through two separate electronic submission forms. The first four steps, which outline the assessment plan, appear on one form. Steps five through seven—the data collection, analysis and implementation phases—appear on the second electronic submission form.

◇ **The planning phase.** When the project of automating Saint Louis University's student outcomes assessment plans began in spring 1998, we were able to find detailed discipline-specific assessment plans for only seven institutions on the web. Five sites proved most useful both in content and display of information given the similarities in assessment approach between those institutions and Saint Louis University. Of these five sites, three (the University of Colorado at Boulder, Boise State University, and Northern Illinois University) gathered information manually via computer disk, e-mail, or written report, and two (Eastern New Mexico University and Montana State University) gathered their plans via an electronic submission form. From the design and layout of those institutions' materials, we selected design features for our own automated plans. We would like to acknowledge and thank Allen Porter at Montana State University for providing the code that was instrumental in our actualizing this project.

◇ **The web forms. The submission pages.** The form can be completed in one of two ways: the text boxes can be filled in interactively or material typed in a word processing program can be "cut and pasted" into the proper boxes by using the edit menu. The form contains five function buttons: (1) *save* (preserves the information that has been typed into the form); (2) *edit* (permits revision of text boxes once the form has been exited); (3) *preview* (permits the typed material to be viewed as it will appear on the web page); (4) *submit* (saves the final version of the goal statement); and (5) *reset form* (provides a blank form for typing the next goal statement). Undoubtedly, the most valuable of these functions are "save" and "edit." They permit someone not only to save typed material but also to retrieve and modify previously typed information, thus eliminating the necessity for repetitive typing.

There is a password text box. A password must be provided before any of the form's functions can be performed, with the exception of the "preview" function. As an additional security measure, three text boxes must be completed (major, goal, and password) before any previously typed information can be retrieved.

Certain text boxes must be completed before the program will permit someone to submit information. These include program major; assessment contact name, telephone, and e-mail address; outcomes goal; and for each objective provided, the assessment measures and performance criteria to be used. Similarly, the second submission form requires basic information and for each objective, the data collection methods, analyses, and actions taken, in response to results. Partially completed forms may be saved for future editing, but the computer program will not permit incomplete work to be submitted for posting to the University's web assessment pages.

◇ **The web forms. The help page.** A help page accompanies each form. It provides a definition of, and brief information about, each component of the form, and provides a few html commands for those wishing to add special features to their pages.

- ◇ **The web forms. The cover pages.** Listing 175 degree programs on one form would have been unwieldy. Therefore, one cover page lists undergraduate majors by college/school while the other lists graduate majors. Selecting the major "SOA Plan" or "Results" will produce the entire plan for a major. Selecting any one of the individual goals will produce the assessment plan for that goal within a major. The form permits someone to ascertain quickly what goals have been assessed in any major and to check quickly on how various disciplines have chosen to assess any one of the 23 Saint Louis University goals.

Implementing a Web-Based Accreditation Self-Study

In order to implement a successful web-based SOA, several resources are necessary. These include time, staff, software, and administrative support.

- ◇ **Time.** Time has several components including design time, development time, and testing time. There were many hours of design work by the Coordinator for Student Outcomes Assessment and the Senior Academic Analyst from Information Technology Services. Numerous hours were spent on development by several technical staff at both Saint Louis University and Montana State University. Considerable testing time also was necessary to eliminate program bugs. Overall, the process took six months of intermittent work, equally divided among the three components. In addition, a continuous, minimal investment of time is required for maintaining the web site. Without adequate time to invest in design, development, and program debugging, it would be impossible to mount a web-based SOA project of this type.

- ◇ **Staff.** This project was implemented with shoestring resources. It should be noted that none of the personnel working on this project was able to devote full time to it. Others were involved on an ad hoc basis. The System Senior Analyst has a background in web page development and programming. He provided a mock-up of web pages that attempted to reconcile the technically possible with the ideal based upon limited resources. A programmer, Kim Jones, took the code, compiled it on our machine, and got it to run. She then modified the code to ensure its compatibility with the assessment blue print and the program's libraries.

  Close, professional working relationships are necessary to bring this project to fruition. This phenomenon seems to hold true across some other institutions, too. Unselfish collegiality has been a major factor to our success in implementing the project.

- ◇ **Software.** It is essential to have good software available in order to make a web-based SOA program operate properly. Having preexisting software from Montana State University made Saint Louis University's SOA project much easier to implement. The software was written in a modular fashion and placed in a library. This open architecture allowed us to modify our web design by calling up this preexisting library and its subfunctions and routines. Again, we wish to acknowledge the generosity of Montana State University in sharing their software with us.

- ◇ **Administrative support.** Without support from administrative officers, it is impossible to implement a web-based SOA project. In addition to encouragement, they provided the funds to hire a student to assist with web-related work.

Conclusion

Despite the amount of time and effort that already has gone into this project and will continue to go into it, we believe the effort is worthwhile. Our goals of making the student outcome assessment information readily available to key constituents, of reducing multiple typing efforts and possible misinterpretations of information, and of ensuring a uniform web site presentation have been met. In addition, automated plans make assessment efforts easier to track, to ensure that the steps are understood, that measures are implemented quantitatively, and that evaluation is systematic and continuous.

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Using Assessment to Strengthen Distance Learning Programs

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Since Fall 1995, The College of St. Scholastica has been offering a Master of Education Program via distance learning. The program has achieved considerable success in addressing the professional development needs of K-12 teachers from communities with limited access to graduate education. Given its innovative mode of delivery, assessment has been an integral part of the program from the very beginning. In this paper, we present examples of program assessment methods, outline the key findings, and discuss how the findings have been used in strengthening program effectiveness.

The Program and Its Mode of Delivery

The goal of the program is to promote professional development of teachers. It is designed to enhance their knowledge and skills, to facilitate the development of networking relationships among them, and to provide them with ongoing opportunities to reflect on current approaches to teaching and learning. It is expected that upon completion of the program the participants will be able to: (1) analyze and reflect on current approaches to teaching and learning; (2) examine theoretical bases of educational innovations and thought presented in the literature; (3) identify significant contemporary issues in education and examine their effects on classroom practice; (4) develop and apply strategies for addressing a broad range of educational challenges; (5) provide appropriate educational opportunities for the diverse population of students they serve; and (6) evaluate the professional growth they achieve as a result of participating in the program.

While these outcomes refer to the program as a whole, the outcomes for specific courses are included in the syllabi that have been developed by the program faculty. The requirements for each course include viewing the videotaped presentations, reading assigned texts and journal articles, writing a reflection paper, and completing other assignments related to teaching and learning. Some of these assignments are done by the participants alone and others in collaboration with fellow participants.

In order to introduce the participants to the program as a whole, to share with them the program philosophy and the College's Benedictine traditions, and to develop a common understanding regarding distance learning, the College has designed an on-site orientation seminar. This seminar is conducted on the College campus as well as at a number of regional sites each term. Participants read assigned sections from the text before attending the seminar. Orientation seminars held on site, rather than through videotaped presentations, provide the participants with opportunities for development of study teams, allow them to meet program faculty and to ask questions about various aspects of the curriculum, and set the tone for the program as a whole (Conrad, Haworth, & Miller, 1993; Carducci, 1996). Similarly, an on-site capstone seminar serves as motivator for the participants to complete the degree requirements, allows them to present the research projects they have completed, provides an opportunity to reflect upon the progress they have made, and encourages them to develop plans for continuing the new direction they have taken to further their professional growth. In addition to on-site seminars, a variety of other strategies have been developed to promote ongoing interaction among the participants. Examples include: (1) group sharing at a distance, which provides the students an opportunity to discuss articles with a classmate of their choice and make comments on papers written by other members of the group; (2) peer conferences that allow the students to discuss (via e-mail, telephone, or U.S. mail) one of the reading assignments with a classmate in place of submitting a reading response journal; (3) on-site miniconferences where the participants give presentations on courses they have taken during the academic year; and (4) discussing the research proposal they have developed for their applied project.

- **Program participants.** At the present time, 335 students are enrolled in the program. All of them are licensed teachers from various communities of the upper Midwest. While most of the participants are elementary or secondary school teachers, preschool, kindergarten, and middle school teachers are also enrolled. In their application essays a large number of students have indicated that they had not been able to participate in graduate education earlier because of other demands on their time, difficulty of traveling long distances during winter months, and lack of availability of high-quality programs in neighboring institutions.

Program Assessment

Given the uniqueness of the curriculum and its innovative mode of delivery, assessment has played a key role in designing the program, in monitoring its implementation, and in determining its impact upon the professional development of participants and their day-to-day activities related to teaching and learning. Following the recommendations made by Posavac and Carey (1997), and principles of good assessment practices outlined by AAHE (1992), we have used multiple methods to collect assessment data from a variety of sources on an ongoing basis. Data collection methods include curriculum review by peers, observation of on-site sessions, course evaluations, telephone interviews with the participants, faculty interviews, and follow-up surveys. Sources we have used to collect assessment information include course syllabi, instructional materials, participants, faculty, and graduates of the program. Overall assessment of the program has been quite favorable. While the participants have expressed satisfaction with the curriculum and the various modes of instructional delivery, they have also drawn our attention to the areas that need improvement. Thus, ongoing assessment of curriculum and instruction has been highly beneficial in strengthening the overall effectiveness of the program. In the following section we outline the assessment procedures we have used and how they have contributed toward program improvement.

- **Curriculum review by peers.** Members of the Graduate Curriculum Committee have conducted in-depth reviews of the course syllabi developed by the education faculty. They have provided the instructors valuable feedback to ensure that the courses reflect graduate level instruction and help students achieve the intended outcomes. This process has led to several rounds of reviews and has contributed to the development of high-quality courses.

- **Observation of on-site sessions.** As the Dean of Graduate Studies, I observed a sample of on-site seminars, mini-conferences, and research presentations. In each of these sessions I observed a high level of engagement on part of the participants. It was clear that the participants had come well-prepared to discuss the assigned readings and/or their research with their professors and classmates. In addition to the discussions during the sessions, the informal interactions that took place during breaks and meals were also beneficial. These interactions allowed the participants to develop study teams, discuss their readings, and collaborate on projects.

- **Course evaluations.** Upon completion of each course, students respond to an evaluation questionnaire that allows them to provide their assessment of the course material, assignments, interaction with classmates and instructors, efforts they put into the course, and support services provided by the College. In addition, they share their impressions regarding the difficulty level of the course, its contribution toward the program goals, its impact on their professional development, and its effectiveness in promoting reflection about teaching and learning. Data from these evaluations have consistently indicated a high level of student satisfaction. It is clear that students are pleased with the availability of instructors, with the prompt return of course work, and with the usefulness of individualized comments provided by the instructors. Students' suggestions have focused mainly upon the amount of writing required in a number of courses. Faculty have carefully examined these suggestions and have made significant changes without affecting the course outcomes. For example, in a course on dealing with difficult students, students were required to read the book and to write a reaction paper. They were also required to keep a journal, which tended to become rather tedious. Now, in the revised version of the course, students read the book and talk with a colleague about what they have read. Instead of keeping the journal they submit an outline of the discussion they had with the colleague.

- **Telephone interviews with the students.** During the first two years of the program, telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of participants. When asked why they chose this program over others they had considered, students' most common responses included: convenience, flexibility, program philosophy, personal communication with the program director, and usefulness/practicality of the curriculum. Additionally, many of them commented that not having to commute to a university was a significant factor in their decision to enroll in this program.

  In general, the participants gave high marks to the program. When asked if they would recommend the program to a friend, 97% gave a rating of "1" or "2" on a four-point scale (1 = highly recommended). Is the program meeting their expectations? Ninety-six percent of the interviewees gave a rating of "1" or "2" (1 = very well) indicating that their expectations were met to a great extent. Participants were also asked to report how the program had influenced their teaching. The overall tenor of the responses indicated that the program has made a significant impact on how they think about what they do.

◇ **Interviews with program faculty.** In order to assess the impact of the new program on the participating faculty, I conducted interviews with them between the first and second year of the program. During these interviews, all of the course instructors spoke highly of the quality of the students enrolled in the program. They talked about the quality of work the participants had done on their response to journal articles, on their research papers, and on other assignments. Given the substantial amount of written work students submit in each of the courses they take, they share a great deal of information about themselves and their work with the instructors. This, along with the telephone and e-mail contacts, has made it possible for the instructors to know their students at a level similar to or better than what they would experience in the traditional classroom. Reviewing students' papers and providing them detailed comments and feedback throughout the year has allowed the faculty to develop mentoring relationships with the students. As a result, many of the program faculty receive telephone calls from their students seeking advice in work-related matters. This interaction with experienced teachers–the opportunity to contribute to their professional growth, and the discussions about teaching and learning in schools–has provided high levels of job satisfaction to the program faculty.

◇ **Follow-up of program graduates.** During the past two years we have surveyed two cohorts of program graduates to determine their level of satisfaction with the program and to examine the extent to which the program had contributed toward their professional growth and had made a difference in their work related to teaching and learning. Graduates reported that the program was excellent in quality, had met their expectations, and had contributed substantially toward their professional growth. Participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the effectiveness of instruction in facilitating learning (Mean Rating = 3.86 on a four-point scale). In addition, they indicated that on-site activities contributed substantially toward the overall goals of the program (Mean Rating = 3.50). While they gave highly favorable ratings to individual courses and reported in some detail how the program has made an impact upon their work as teachers, they also gave a large number of thoughtful suggestions for program improvement. They expressed a strong desire to have more contact with other students in the program, as well as with their instructors. They suggested the need for reducing the number of video-based assignments, increasing the number of on-site activities, promoting better coordination across courses, and reconfiguring the research courses. As a result of these suggestions, the program faculty have reduced the use of videotapes and study guides, have reorganized the research courses, streamlined the writing assignments, and have created additional opportunities for students' interaction with one another as well as with faculty. To date, the drop-out rate has been less than 10% and the program appears to be meeting, and in some cases, exceeding students' expectations. Ongoing assessment has played a key role in all phases of the program. It has provided valuable information that has been used to make the program both effective and efficient.

Conclusion

In addition to ongoing program improvement, our experiences in assessing the distance learning program have confirmed a number of principles of good assessment practices outlined by the American Association of Higher Education (1992). These principles include: (1) assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have explicitly stated purposes; (2) assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experience that led to those outcomes; (3) assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic; (4) assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved; (5) assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about; (6) assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change; (7) through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public; and (8) assessment is most effective when undertaken in an environment that is receptive, supportive, and enabling. Given the contribution assessment has made in strengthening the education program, faculty in other disciplines are now planning to use similar procedures in their programs as well.

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Online Disconnections for Adult Students and Two Institutions Approaches to Connecting Them

Gwen Hillesheim

Introduction

"Distance Learning is not a new phenomenon" (CGS Policy Statement, 1998). However, the recent advent of, and rapid expansion of distance learning using online or web based technologies is. Programs that utilize various computer technologies have begun to gather data and evaluate the learning experience of their students. For some students the nature of their distance delivered program creates multiple opportunities for new types of disconnections. This may, in part, have influenced the high attrition rate many online programs have experienced (Verduin & Clark, 1991). However, other students have declared attending courses in the online environment as an experience of intense community with more connections to colleagues, scholars, and the academic community than ever experienced in a face to face experience.

How shall we as administrators and faculty assure our students a positive experience within a technology-enhanced environment? What strategies are worth implementing to reduce the possibility of disconnections, and increase the academic connectors for students? Will increasing the opportunity for new kinds of connections increase the likelihood of student success and increased retention, thereby contributing to overall program success? Education professionals have begun to ask themselves questions like these related to the integration of technology into education. Many institutions have embraced online support or distance delivered courses and programs as part of their curricular offerings. Two diverse institutions–Indiana University and Walden University–will discuss their approaches and options for increasing the probability of connections for student success.

Walden University

Walden University has been offering course based, graduate programs in the online environment for more than three years. In that time much has been learned about disconnections and connections for students. Disconnections may include: the characteristics of adult learners, the initial student-faculty relationship, and the use of the technology itself (Hillesheim, 1998). According to Berge and Schrum (1998) a mini-course would "ensure students understand" (p.34) their environment, rights, and responsibilities. Walden has developed a critical orientation course for all students entering the University that will be discussed in detail below.

Retention and Student Success

Walden University in 1997 and 1998 began studying the problem of retention of first-year graduate (master's and doctoral) students. Approximately 30% of new students leave their program by the end of their fifth quarter of enrollment. The consequences for both the students and the institution are quite significant. While Walden's philosophy has historically been that student learning can be self-paced, we increasingly came to understand that many first year students need more from the University than they had been receiving in order to succeed: a better structure, more accessible resources, and additional support structure (Morrison, 1998). In the fall of 1998 Walden University began an initiative called "Retention First-A Quality Start" providing a new role for faculty, linking these faculty with program administration, establishing increased support for both the student and his/her faculty mentor, and beginning a structured orientation course for students. The goals of this initiative are legion: a higher rate of student retention in the first year of enrollment, effective socialization of students to the importance of quality and integrity in their academic and scholarly work, preparing and assisting faculty in guiding students through their initial set of requirements, and providing faculty mentors and academic counselors the opportunity for more timely and effective intervention with "at-risk" students.

The practical application of these services is coordinated through the newly established "Start-up Team." This team of counselors has several tasks:

- Assist in development of orientation materials.
- Participate in an orientation conference call for the new student.
- Monitor the new student's activity within the online classroom.
- Monitor the new student's progress toward accomplishment of the first quarter objectives.
- Assign and monitor the new student/previous student mentor relationship.
- Review the student's Program of Study.
- Monitor the student's GPA for minimum standards.
- Monitor student course registrations.
- Support the student and the faculty mentor throughout the completion of the first year academic requirements.
- Intervene in situations where progress is not being made.
- Work closely with the faculty mentor assuring student progress.

EDUC 6000 Success Strategies in the Online Environment

Much of what the master's level students experienced as a change was the addition of a new, required, zero credit course to their academic program requirements. This course is offered within their first quarter, and is taken simultaneously with their initial academic course requirement. The course is called *Success Strategies in the Online Environment.* The 12 week course covers such topics as "Being an Independent Learner," "Becoming a Member of the Walden Community of Scholars," "Writing as a Graduate Student," "Getting Help: Where the Resources Are," and "Critical Thinking Skills." The web-based course is taught by the new student's faculty mentor utilizing an established series of modules representing the specific content of the course. In addition the mentor facilitates group discussion each week regarding the content, assists the student in his/her first quarter connectivity and technology issues, promotes community, reviews the student's program of study, assists in student registration, monitors course related activities, and generally serves as the student's first point of contact. The specific outcomes of the Success Strategies and their related activities developed by the institution include the following:

- Ability to access and navigate within the Walden Forum
- Ability to plan a personal academic program
- Ability to use technology appropriately for registration of courses
- Creation of a skill set of appropriate success strategies for use within a distance environment

Student Comments

Currently this course is completing its second quarter of delivery. Student evaluative comments of the course are positive and include such statements as:

- "I think Educ 6000 class is a very good class, especially if I consider the people who helped us like, R_ and S_. I say thanks a lot for your patience and help. Our mentor has been wonderful and I thank you. I hope we all can still keep working together in any form to achieve our goals."

- "How does it feel to be at the end? I have loved this class and am glad to know it's pass/fail because I feel pretty stressed about my grades in my other classes... I'm sure I didn't do poorly, but it's been literally six years since anyone gave me a letter grade on anything! So I sit in the shoes of my students at the end of a quarter and remember yet again to think carefully about my practice because this is how it feels!"

- "This class is a motivating class, and I liked it a lot, because it helped me when I was still lost in the process. I do not know how other classes will be but this class is a good class. Our mentor deserves a lot of credit for what is happening in this class, because when one cannot get information or answer for anything, this class will always be there. Registration, Professional Development Plan (PDP) and the Program Of Study (POS) are the sections I think were hard, and I think I still have to make sure that everything is covered."

- "I can't believe I did all the computer projects. Instead of grading myself, I am going to give the mentor an A+ for creating a course so valuable. I learned so much about the most valuable tool we have…seeking information. Knowing where to find information is the most valuable connection I can think of. I hope I can accomplish my POS plan and I have a lot of support especially from the V.P. of Academic Affairs of my department and from the College President that I feel I can make it thru and most important. Thank you (mentor) for being there when I needed help."

- "I think I did pretty well. I messed up on registration. I'm not quite sure what happened. I had to do late registration today. Hopefully, everything is okay and I will be able to start next quarter in EDUC 6150. I spent a lot of time on my PDP and POS, and I finally got it perfect. I hope everything goes as I have planned. This has been a great class!"

- "This program seemed to meet my needs of becoming more informed about curriculum and of learning strategies that can be of help to the schools that I consult with. That it happened to be presented in an online format was secondary, in my case."

- "I feel much more in touch with the people here at Walden as far as outside life and where we are at. I miss having more casual interaction with people at Walden– a virtual hallway isn't the same as a before class chat..."

- "Interaction with other students has been very cordial, but most times it is only on the class forum. We should interact more, because the facilities are in Walden University to do that."

Conclusions

Based on these and other comments it appears that students are quite satisfied with the non-credit orientation course. They were successfully able to navigate within the environment, plan a personal academic program, use technology appropriately for registration of courses, and create a skill set of appropriate success strategies for use within a distance environment. All the students in the course were able to complete the necessary outcomes to receive a Pass in the course. In addition to completing the required objective for the course students also experience creating an online community, and writing, library, and critical thinking skills.

In addition to these comments University administration learned that reordering the sequence, closer monitoring of the new student/previous student mentor relationship, and faculty tracking mechanisms would also improve the new student's experience. While the first two quarters evaluation of *Success Strategies in the Online Environment* indicate overall student satisfaction it is still to early to determine the actual impact on retention. Ongoing assessment of student performance and student satisfaction, and their effect on retention will continue in the belief there is a correlation between student support in the initial quarters of a new students graduate experience and their success as a scholar.

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Chapter 3

NCA

Connecting the Disconnects:
International Education

CONNECTING
THE DISCONNECTS

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Challenges in Developing a Network of Institutional Undergraduate Extended Campus Programs

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Introduction

The University of Colorado at Denver (UCD) through its College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) has developed a network of international college sites. These include two baccalaureate degree programs, one at Moscow State University in Moscow where there are approximately 250 students and the other at China Agricultural University in Beijing where there are approximately 450 students. There have been two graduation exercises in Moscow and one in Beijing. In addition, there are courses being offered in Mongolia in conjunction with Ulaanbaatar University and the Mongolian Academy of Sciences; courses are also being offered in Kathmandu, Nepal, and in Taipei, Taiwan. When we refer to the international college network we are referring to these program sites.

This presentation deals with the challenges in developing a network of institutional undergraduate extended campus programs at international sites as set forth above. The development of this network presupposed several working assumptions. First, the program at each site had to be of sufficient quality such that students studying at any site had to be indistinguishable from those at the Denver campus insofar as scholarly achievement was concerned. Second, all of the courses had to be taught in English. Third, all of the courses and all of the instructors would have to be reviewed and approved by faculty in the departments of the college on the Denver campus. Fourth, students could study by turns at any of the sites or at only one of the sites and complete a baccalaureate degree from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Colorado at Denver. Fifth, students at international sites had to meet all the requirements for the degree, a fact that presupposed offering the UCD curriculum in sufficient diversity to allow timely graduation. Sixth, timely graduation was to be assured by a highly structured curriculum and the admission of student cohorts. And seventh, our partner institutions had to be willing to provide substantial infrastructure and physical plan support.

UCD is a public institution without a history of international involvements. Starting up international programs in an arena where many other institutions were already very active in study abroad programs and in faculty and student exchange could prove a formidable task where the keen competition might exclude a novice institution. Notwithstanding these challenges, we resolved to approach our initiatives with a rethinking of the assumptions that seemed to be prevailing in international education. We decided to develop programs that had the potential for continuity and allowed for the development of infrastructure relationships, not programs that depended on the transient volunteerism of faculty and the accident of student interest. We wished to cultivate partners with staying power and understood that continuity offered significant long term programmatic and financial benefits to the participating institutions, to students, and to faculties. We were interested in infrastructure relationships involving degree programs, assuming such infrastructuredness would provide mutual understanding, continuity, stability, and a loyalty to the joint program on all sides and at every level. Finally, we were interested in the fundamental cross-cultural understanding that results from living in a culture, studying that culture from within its core values as they are represented in its education system, and in exposing future leaders to the issues with which future leaders will necessarily be occupied.

Challenges

What follows is a list of challenges and a discussion of each. The list is not exhaustive, nor is our discussion. The challenges vary in significance and in the time and effort required to address them. For example, we might not expect books, specifically textbooks, to be a big challenge. However, the accreditation site visit team that visited Moscow early in the development of our program quickly heard from the students and faculty about the problem with textbooks.

◇ **Books.** To begin with, the students did not believe that books cost so much. Somebody must be skimming off the top. Well, what if the administration of the International College photocopied all the textbooks for all the students? Of course, that was unacceptable. What if five copies of each text were put in a reading room and all students would read the books in the reading room? With students spread all over Moscow, arranging the logistics of their reading schedules for all their courses, up to five courses per student, was impossible, especially for approximately 250 students. Then, getting the books to Moscow, when finally everyone understood that every student had to have one or more texts for every course, turned out to be problematic. At first, administrators and faculty carried books as extra luggage. This became impossible when the load reached 14 boxes of books. So, we sent them by ordinary post with expedited service of some kind. The books were held at customs for six weeks. And the fact that they were not for resale and were for use in an educational institution meant nothing in terms of avoiding customs duty or expediting discharge. In fact, we were charged for storage every day they sat in customs. So, there are price issues, program issues, customs issues, and so on. Without someone on site who knows the culture and can speak the language, those books might still be sitting in customs.

◇ **Legal challenges.** There are at least three important legal conditions to be satisfied in the development of a joint program with a foreign university. First, not only is it important to sign agreements with the partner university, agreements that set forth the terms and conditions of the relationship at the working level and are agreed to by senior officers of both universities, but it is also important to take into consideration state or national requirements for such agreements. Second, it is necessary to be satisfied that the candidate partner university in the foreign country has authority to enter into binding international agreements, especially if the program envisions a relationship where local students, that is, those in the foreign country, will matriculate on their home soil where there may be an appearance of the foreign government subsidizing the education of students in an American university or an American university program. Thus, explicit government approval must also be gained. And finally, it must be determined what the status of the American university is as a legal entity in the host country. That is, what is its ability to legally engage in educational activities in the host country under the constitution and statutes of that country? Is it to be considered a for-profit corporation or a not-for-profit educational institution? For example, does the activity of the American university come under the provisions of a treaty with the United States and the treaty defines the nature of the legal entity, or is it necessary to obtain documents, judgements, or authorizations from appropriate government or tax authorities in the country? It is important to have this area clarified before business begins or suffer the risk of a government decision requiring the retroactive payment of significant taxes, penalties, and interest. Just because a university is considered not-for-profit in the United States does not mean that such a status will translate to the foreign venue. Expert legal advice should be sought in this area.

◇ **Financial challenges.** There are at least three substantive issues in the domain of finances. First, it is important to clarify whether or not the finance people at your university understand the mechanisms involved in sending and receiving money to and from abroad, respectively. When our development began our people had not used electronic wiring to send relatively large sums of money around the world. Second, of course, finance people at the partner university usually had the same problems ours did. These two challenges are fairly easily addressed: people learn how to accomplish these tasks and eventually transfers of funds begin to work. The third challenge in this area is more complicated in that it involves more variables. For example, there is the hidden cost of doing business through state banks challenge. In China 6% is charged as a bank service fee. Such a fee is inescapable and must be considered part of the cost of doing business. Then there is the instability of banks challenge. In Moscow, bank bankruptcy created problems leading to a loss of operating funds. There is the inflation challenge. For example, at times in Moscow students were paying tuition weekly and instructors were paid weekly in order to avoid the massive loss of buying power created by escalating inflation. Financial risks and challenges should be considered a part of international program development.

◇ **Faculty and staff challenges.** There are challenges in developing a cadre of faculty and staff support at a remote site, especially when there is not a well developed tradition of faculty teaching overseas in the College and when funds for the development are limited to the revenues from tuition and fees. Our target from the beginning was to have 50% of the instructors be Americans and 50% be from the host country. Of the 50% recruited in the host country, we were anticipating a 50/50 mix of American Ph.D.'s and local professors. The difficulty of recruitment is proportional to the market availability in the disciplines in which majors are developed. For example, the market is generally tight and expensive in economics and not so much so in political science. On the other hand, the desirability of a major in the host country is market driven, much the same way cycles happen in the United States. So, a significant challenge has to do with choices of majors to be offered at the extended site and the concomitant recruitment of faculty. Faculty have mortgages and families and are not accustomed to teaching long stretches of time displaced from home. As a consequence, initially, our course schedules were modularized to accommodate the living circumstances of faculty who had a desire to teach abroad but could not teach for a full semester. Little by little we have found instructors who are able to teach full semesters and a few who are desirous to move from site to site.

The availability of a knowledgeable support staff at both the main campus and the host campus is crucial and certainly a challenge. At the main campus support for such a program has reached into every support office already extant in the functioning of the main campus program. Admissions, registration, schedule and catalog construction and review, and so on, need the same careful administrative attention in support of international outreach as the local enterprise. Thus, it is very important that all or any practices that need adjusting because of the academic and administrative support required for the foreign site be discussed with the appropriate main campus personnel. Exactly the same things hold true for the host campus. The goal of a university is to help students acquire competencies in their chosen academic and life careers. This is true at UCD and at the sites of our partners. However, administrative practices vary and the availability of resources may vary. All of us have had to learn which practices were crucial to our mission and had to be agreed upon without variation and which practices permitted latitude and were the result of cultural differences or different traditions of administration.

◇ **Administrative challenges.** Essentially, the administrative challenges come down to the accommodations that must be made as a result of undertaking to do the academic job at a site remote from the main campus and working with a staff that is not conversant with practices at American universities. For example, conducting a graduation check, the process of checking a student's course of study to determine whether or not the student has satisfied requirements for the degree, requires matching records on both sides of the ocean. When recordkeeping practices differ, this is not an easy task until, of course, it has been done a few times and definitions are agreed upon. We tried to rely upon one another's staffs to carry out the other institution's administrative tasks. This has mostly been successful. However, we are now at the stage where, because of the size of the program and the need to address a few nonfatal but continuing problems, we are making plans to place, where feasible, part-time administrators who would provide on-site support and also teach. Issues of payment, travel, housing, negotiations with departments who relinquish valued colleagues for a season to teach abroad, communication all represent challenges.

◇ **Oversight of the academic program.** On the face of it challenges related to oversight of the academic program are simpler that administrative challenges. Ostensibly this is because the rules are universal and without exception. The faculty are responsible for the curriculum of the college and by extension the faculties of departments are responsible for the curricular areas with which they are charged. This is true not only on the main campus but also at the international college sites. The faculties of departments approve all courses related to their majors and the courses they teach within the core curriculum. They also approve all instructors. In principle, for example, a course in composition, is the same no matter where it is being offered.

◇ **Structure of the academic program.** Exactly the same courses are offered at all sites. The core courses are the same; those offered for the major are the same, and so on. The only exception is in the case where a culture or language course unique to the host country is approved by the cognizant main campus faculty. There are very few such courses; however, the mechanisms are in place for expansion in this area. What prevents such development is the inability of students to fit such courses into their programs of study. That is, the program is still too small to easily permit such curricular variety. Commonalities across program locations allow students to slip easily into the curricular stream if they undertake to move from one campus to another.

◇ **Faculty and curriculum governance challenges.** Faculty and curriculum governance challenges at the network sites should not be any greater than they are at the main campus. So long as the authority and responsibility for curriculum and faculty oversight are lodged at the main campus, and this is clearly established and maintained, negotiation and discussion can proceed, but always with the understanding that in such matters ultimate determination is with the main campus. With these notions firmly asserted, it is worth mentioning that the efficacy and soundness of faculty and curriculum governance depends on practices in departments. Some departments are careful about details, and some are not. Some departments prefer not to be bothered with curricular details and delegate administration in its entirety to the chairperson. Some chairpersons are more diligent than others, and so on. As a result, it is important for academic administrators at the college level to seek accountability in these matters across the departments and the college as a whole. Challenges in these areas are not unique to remote site administration; they apply to academic administration in general.

◇ **Cultural challenges**. One of the challenges in the cultural area is language. It is probably the most overt cultural difference. This is a challenge because the international college program is offered at remote sites in English. All of the courses must be in English in order for the principle to work that permits any student to study at any site without the imposition of course or grade transfer. The courses at these sites are UCD courses and the transcripts are by their nature UCD transcripts. If courses or portions of courses are taught in the language of the host country, then the students sitting in such a course from other countries are unable to take the course effectively. Fluency in the language of the host country is desirable for many reasons, but it is not a requirement for participation in the program. In the local situation there is a tendency to suggest that a history course covering some history of the host country should be in the language of the host country. It is true and it makes sense. But such a practice would contravene one of the basic assumptions of the network program and lead to difficulties.

Another important challenge relates to the English language skills and standards for students who enter the program. It is very important that entering students possess the language skills required for success in the program. We have decided not to be in the English language instruction game—only in the testing game.

Still another challenge relates to cultural differences in how education is paid for or subsidized. Since our program is an enterprise activity in the sense that costs are covered by revenues, students from cultures in which there is a history of state subsidy of education are not socialized to the idea that students pay. This is a fact that we return to again and again with our colleagues. And, these are not issues exclusively in developing countries.

Overall, we have found that the virtues of honesty, straightforward discussion, mutual respect, and energetic pursuit of educational goals have typified our relationships with our colleagues at the sites in our network. There are certain basic principles of human conduct that rise above cultural differences. Indeed, histories, political systems, arts, music, literatures, economies, sciences, geographies and languages inspire and invite us to marvel at peoples we have come closer to. But having noted this, it is still the case that it is by virtue of sharing basic principles of human conduct that has made our program as successful as it has been.

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Accepting the Challenge of Overseas International Education: Opportunities, Integrity, and Institutional Disconnects

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In 1989, Madonna University approached the North Central Association for approval to offer on-site courses for two groups of students in Taiwan, one cohort pursuing a master's degree in business administration and the second in educational leadership. Ten years later in 1999, the University can point to a record of success in the international arena: graduating eight cohorts of master's students in educational leadership and four cohorts in business through its on-site programs; establishing on-campus bilingual versions of these same programs in 1995, which entail a nine-month on-campus residency in the fields of business, educational leadership, and health services; and expanding to Mainland China, working collaboratively with the Shanghai School of International Finance to offer the master's degree in business. For a small institution to respond effectively to these opportunities required that faculty and staff learn to embrace change and commit themselves to making these programs work. Everyone involved had to be willing to identify and repair the institutional disconnects that threatened the viability and integrity of these international programs while continuing to address the needs of nearly 4,000 domestic students as well.

Over the course of this ten-year period, the University worked closely with the North Central Association, beginning with a focused visit in 1989 prior to receiving permission to launch the on-site program in Taiwan, a staff review in 1995 during the process of negotiations with Mainland China, and a comprehensive review as part of the University's ongoing ten-year review in 1998. Throughout much of this process, the NCA's *Principles for Good Practice in Overseas International Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals* (Chapter 11 of the *Handbook of Accreditation)* served as a helpful articulation of standards and expectations for excellence to guide decision making and policy development for these programs, laying a firm foundation upon which to build and expand in the international arena.

Why International Programs?

Many American colleges and universities have been motivated to develop international education programs in response to declining domestic enrollments and decreasing numbers of "typical" college populations, especially in a field such as business administration that feels the direct effect of fluctuating demand for its programs. In addition, increasing opportunities for students to study and faculty to teach abroad during the last decade and the likelihood of expanding opportunities during the new millennium (Goodwin and Nacht 1988) make international programs a more practical and feasible alternative than ever before. American higher education continues to be highly prized, especially in Pacific Rim countries, and many prospective students are attracted by the caché that comes with a degree from the United States. As the world shrinks and international travel and study become possible for increasing numbers of students, American colleges and universities can look realistically to prospective markets of international students to supplement their student bodies.

However, there are reasons for cultivating international programs that go well beyond the practical needs of bottom-line institutional economics. Substantial evidence supports the idea that internationalizing the curriculum aids in professional growth and development of faculty members (Sanders and Ward 1990). First of all, teaching in a foreign environment introduces the individual faculty member to a different culture in a way unlike any other experience. Explaining one's cultural assumptions as embedded in course content and getting direct and palpable feedback from students provides a *de facto* comparative analysis of, in this case, Western versus East Asian worldviews. So much of the conduct of business, the practice of education, and the concepts of health, wellness, and disease grow out of deeply held and often unexamined beliefs and values related to human purpose, aspirations, and expectations. Teaching, more than almost any other activity, exposes cultural differences and opens up both student and teacher to alternative ways of understanding basic existential issues. Of course, the very "foreignness" of the teaching environment can create problems for conducting an effective international program, as research shows that culture shock can occur even among experienced faculty and administrators (Black 1976; Horowitz 1987; Kuby 1980; Verner 1975). Adequate advance preparation and orientation can prepare faculty to anticipate cultural differences so that their encounter with another culture is positive and enriching rather than negative and disorienting.

In addition to cultural enrichment, international teaching experiences almost always lead faculty members to an enhanced understanding of pedagogy. Faculty members are challenged to rethink how they teach and consider barriers to their students' understanding. Often faculty members recognize that their domestic students have similar, if not as dramatic, difficulties with key concepts and issues and find that their international teaching experiences actually improve their on-campus teaching. Ausubel (1978) stated that excellence in international teaching reflects qualitative and quantitative elements related to planning, instruction, and evaluation, factors that are critical in both overseas and domestic teaching. Excellent teaching is crucial for the success of any instructional program. As in most successful instructional situations, the international instructor must identify teaching content, instructional methods, and evaluation techniques prior to actually meeting with students. To facilitate this process, the crucial role of the administrator is to communicate explicitly in advance of program start-up the policies, procedures, and program requirements (Biehler and Snowman 1990; Good and Brophy 1990) that will facilitate or constrain the teaching situation.

Another motivation for developing international programs grows out of the mission of many colleges and universities to provide access to higher education for those whose needs are not being met. In many countries throughout the world, higher education is focused on the traditional age learner and on those graduate students who can afford to enroll full-time in graduate study. Often the needs of working adult students are ignored, or the demand is so great that large numbers of older students cannot gain access to advanced education. This can be understood as an issue of social justice, and American institutions are in a position to utilize their excess capacity to educate adult learners, drawing upon "androgogical" skills developed over years of dealing with nontraditional students. Following this line of thinking, international education can be viewed as a logical extension of the mission to provide educational access, and, just as institutions adapted to prior populations of nontraditional learners, colleges and universities have committed themselves to finding effective strategies for teaching foreign students, most of whom are non-native speakers of English.

Using the *Principles for Good Practice*

The *Principles for Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U S. Nationals* was endorsed by the NCA in March 1990 as guidelines for institutions to follow as they pursue the development of international education. Based on the accumulated wisdom of many institutions with experience in this arena, the *Principles for Good Practice* identifies the major stumbling blocks to effective and successful implementation of overseas programs. Roughly, the principles for good practice fall into nine categories:

- Institutional Mission
- Authorization
- Instructional Program
- Resources
- Admissions and Records
- Students
- Control and Administration
- Ethics and Public Disclosure
- Contractual Arrangements

Each category entails standards of good practice that, in effect, provide the most effective model for implementing international education programs, especially in cases where the language of the cooperating country is not English and transactions have to be conducted in another language. These standards constitute the best advice that an institution can follow because, as any college or university that has launched an overseas program soon discovers, "whatever can cause a problem will."

Likely Areas of Institutional Disconnect

Following the *Principles of Good Practice* can help institutions avoid some of the common pitfalls of international education programs, thus reducing stress on the institution's faculty and staff and ensuring that the students are happy with their educational experience.

- **Policies and processes inside and outside the mainstream.** Most institutions struggle with how to handle international programs within the routine functions that have been designed for domestic students. For example, most institutional computer systems designate data fields based on the needs of U.S. students. Most staff and administrators would expect these fields to suffice for international students, until all of the computer generated mail for these students returns because of incomplete addresses. Who would have thought that all of the lines or designations in the address were important! Certainly not the clerk in charge of a mailing. Often international education programs entail special fees and charges, unique deadlines or schedules, and distinct policies regarding housing and residency requirements; but the computer resources and routine practices of the institutions may not accommodate these exceptions to the rules–and more often than not, the discovery is made after, not before, the fact. Clearly an important resource issue has to do with analyzing the capability of the institution to handle exceptionality, and ongoing internal communication is required to anticipate and avoid problems.

- **"Managing" recruiters.** As many institutions have discovered, word of mouth is a powerful tool for promoting international programs and recruiting students. Madonna University discovered that as soon as it had a proven track record, almost every graduate wanted to become a recruiter for the program, which sounds like a positive position to be in. However, multiple recruiters means that prospective students are hearing different things about the institution's program, ranging from admissions requirements to costs to the actual degree being conferred. In addition, the logistical difficulty of maintaining communication with multiple recruiters, keeping everyone informed and up-to-date, and ensuring that all parties feel valued and appreciated becomes a drain on the time and energy of everyone involved in the program. The wise practice is to identify those who have the ability to deal effectively with the students and funnel all students through one or two officially designated recruiters.

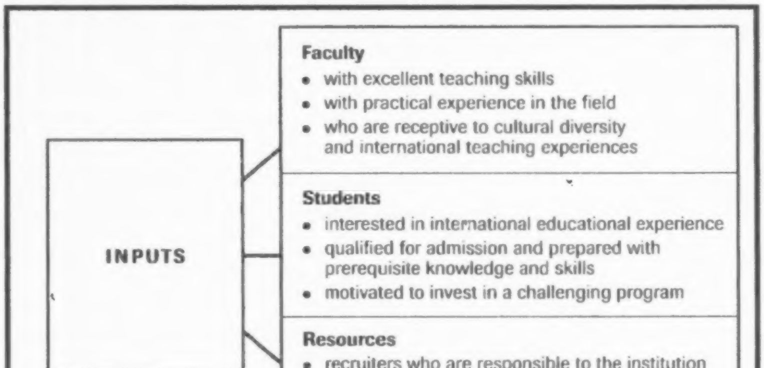
- **Breaking up is hard to do.** Dealing with groups of students as cohorts appears to be an efficient and effective way to provide instruction for international students. But the tendency of the students, once they arrive on campus, is to stay within the cohort–speaking Chinese or whatever language to their fellow countrymen–rather than practicing their English, learning about American life and culture, and making new acquaintances. Often students within the cohort feel isolated from the mainstream of campus life but are too shy to venture out into unfamiliar territory. Additionally, the institution's efforts to internationalize the campus and the curriculum are stymied because the domestic students end up having little contact with this tremendous resource right in their midst. A concerted effort to "break up" the cohort and push the students into the mainstream of campus life will have positive benefits for the visiting students as well as the campus as a whole.

- **Changing the rules of the game in midstream.** Business in other cultures is often conducted within the context of mutual friendship and negotiation is ongoing rather than codified into firm contractual form. Institutions often learn about changes in government regulations–and students and recruiters expect ongoing adjustments will be made–after programs are well in place. This becomes especially difficult to manage when students or graduates offer rumor as fact or when word about changes in regulations reaches institutions second or third hand rather than from an authoritative source. The *Principles for Good Practice* provide sage advice by emphasizing the importance of documenting the authorization for programs and clearly communicating the provisions of the program in a carefully worded contract, available in reliable translations in both languages. Additionally, Madonna University has developed a bilingual program description sheet, a copy of which students are required to sign and return as part of the admissions package. The advantage of such a measure is that students know coming into the program exactly what they will receive–and, as rumored government changes circulate, the institution can point to what it has promised its students. Then, if a regulatory change can be documented, the institution can work with that change within the parameters it has set for the program.

- **Classroom issues and bilingual strategies.** The key issue in providing effective instruction for international education programs centers on the willingness and ability of faculty members to adapt to a challenging teaching-learning paradigm. Obviously, if the faculty members were fluent in the language of the learner, then the instructional situation would approximate the on-campus experience. However, most institutions will never be in a position to offer a complete academic program in the language of a host country, especially if the institution wants to involve and enrich as many of its full-time faculty members as possible in the interest of internationalization. The most effective measures for ensuring that instructors will be prepared is, first, providing a well organized orientation, drawing on the expertise of individuals who have been successful in bilingual teaching; and, second, providing opportunities to share the insights faculty members have gained on an ongoing basis, with the goal of engaging others in discussion and problem solving about key issues. For programs to remain successful over time, the experience of faculty members needs to be kept fresh and interesting. The teaching format must not become routine but remain an object of inquiry, a stimulating problem that draws on the individual's intellectual and other faculties to solve. This can happen only if there are forums for dialogue and conversation among colleagues at the departmental, college, or institutional level.

Conceiving a Workable Model and Putting It into Place

It is helpful for institutions to develop and articulate a workable model for their international education programs—a model that will identify how the critical pieces of the program relate and interact. At Madonna University, a model has evolved over the ten-year history of international programs that serves as a way of conceptualizing the inputs, value added components, and outputs of the programs. The model attempts to capture the dynamic flow of the program elements as the process of education transpires over time. The fact that each stage is multi-dimensional, that is, addressing the needs or expectations of the different constituencies engaged in process, aids the individuals and offices involved in understanding their role. The dynamic is synergistic; if one element is removed, the whole is affected well beyond the boundaries of that individual part.


INPUTS
Faculty
• with excellent teaching skills
• with practical experience in the field
• who are receptive to cultural diversity and international teaching experiences
Students
• interested in international educational experience
• qualified for admission and prepared with prerequisite knowledge and skills
• motivated to invest in a challenging program
Resources
• recruiters who are responsible to the institution and to the students
• administrative policies and procedures that facilitate teaching and learning
• appropriate instructional resources (classrooms, technology, library)
VALUE ADDED
• maintain high quality standards comparable to that of on-campus programs
• provide innovative, student-centered instruction
• assess and continuously improve program
OUTPUTS
• international learning experience for students
• international teaching experience for faculty
• student receives American degree
• institution forms relationships with international students, faculty, universities, organizations, and graduates
• further internationalization of institution
• increased status and reputation of institution

The Madonna University Conceptual Model for International Education Programs

Lessons Learned and Final Conclusions

The most enduring lesson that Madonna University has learned over the course of its experience of sponsoring international education programs is that the *Principles for Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U S.* Nationals serves as valuable advice from practitioners who have experience conducting successful programs rather than functioning as mere hoops in the accreditation rat race. The fact is that programs operate more smoothly, efficiently, and viably for the individuals involved in them if the advice is heeded and decisions spring from their careful review and application. Ultimately the *Principles* identify critical junctures at which disconnects can occur and provide a game plan for making the connections that facilitate teaching and learning in the international arena.

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Chapter 4

NCA

Connections with Other Institutions and Industry

CONNECTING
THE DISCONNECTS

104th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
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Mending the Disconnect: Establishing Quality and Portability of Dual Credit Courses through State Policy

Robert B. Stein
Anthony G. Girardi

Introduction

As fewer students are following a traditional path to a college degree, states are responding with policies to increase student access to postsecondary education. Often, these policies are intended to promote seamless transitions from secondary to postsecondary education, with colleges and universities being asked to provide high school students with opportunities to earn college credit. The disconnect between high school graduation and college entrance has drawn the attention of researchers and state policymakers who are attempting to understand and address the challenges identified with comprehensive K-16 initiatives (Griffith, 1996). Many state statutes permit the delivery to high school students of a single course which, upon successful completion, results in both high school and college credit. This phenomenon–known as dual credit–provides students with transcripted college credit prior to graduation from high school.

The development of dual credit programs has been undertaken by the states in distinct and diverse ways. Policies and practices have evolved largely in response to their respective political, economic, and social conditions. A 1997 SHEEO survey suggests the wide range of approaches to dual credit policy taken by states (Russell, 1998). While some states are highly engaged in the process of dual credit delivery, others set forth only broad-based parameters for what is viewed as fundamentally an institutional/school district relationship. In yet other states, dual credit is just beginning to capture the interest of policymakers. Nevertheless, in many states, dual credit is becoming an attractive advanced-credit opportunity for high school students.

Identifying the Disconnects

As it evolves, dual credit either reduces or increases the disconnect between high school graduation and college entrance. From the perspective of colleges and universities, dual credit is often a form of distance education that targets well-prepared and highly motivated high school students (Chatman and Smith, 1998). In addition to increasing tuition revenues, institutions may utilize dual credit as a recruitment strategy. Dual credit has the potential to increase a student's understanding of the preparation and performance necessary to successfully complete collegiate-level work. In many instances, dual credit courses are offered at the high school during the school day with the help of high school faculty who have adjunct faculty status with the department offering the collegiate credit. Dual credit partnerships are also perceived to have the followng benefits:

- Enhancement of the high school curriculum
- Provision to teachers of professional development opportunities
- An increase in access to college-level resources
- Integration of high school and collegiate-evel experiences

○ Reinforcement of the need to be adequately prepared for college

○ Utilization of a familiar environment

○ Shortening time to degree

While quality dual credit programs provide great potential for minimizing the disconnect between the high school and college experience, transcripted dual credit courses are not universally accepted as college credit. In particular, many institutions deny credit that is not validated by performance on a national examination (Chatman and Smith, 1998). Thus, a rift in the relationship between institutions translates into a disconnect between the traditional approaches to "full faith in credit from an accredited institution" and the practice of creating obstacles for students who attempt to transfer dual credit courses from one institution to another. Oversight boards, accrediting agencies, and institutions are increasing their interest in the quality and portability of dual credit courses as more and more students enter college with transcripted credit–credit that may come from another institution. In such circumstances, state policy can be used as a tool to promote quality and consistency across institutions, ensuring the portability of college credit earned by high school students through dual credit programs. The challenge, then, is to develop a comprehensive state policy, one that embraces quality control and credibility of dual credit courses and their comparability to similar on-campus experiences. This challenge addresses a complex set of interrelated disconnects.

Dual credit cannot be regarded solely as a matter for higher education policymakers. The need for comprehensive involvement in determining policy is evidenced by the fact that most dual credit takes place primarily in high school settings and is typically taught by high school teachers. State policy affecting the K-12 system can either widen or close the gap experienced by students. By promoting a consistent and coherent dual credit policy in both K-12 and higher education sectors, states can avoid the disconnect of sending mixed messages to students.

Differences between private and public institutions may reinforce severe disconnects, especially in the area of compliance with public policy initiatives. Even in the strongest of policy environments, ensuring compliance by private institutions to public policies remains a major challenge. One approach could be the development by the higher education community of a "Good Housekeeping seal of approval"–a signal to consumers of an institution's commitment to good practices.

Furthermore, an overall disconnect potentially exists between an "ideal vision" promulgated by state policy and actual institutional practice. One apparent anomaly is reinforced when state policy makes it easier for high school students to gain access to college-level courses than first-time, full-time college students, who are often required to pass college placement tests prior to being granted access to the identical course. While there is general agreement among dual-credit providers that high school students taking dual credit courses should be held to the same high standards expected of college students, the academic community disagrees on the best way to use state-level policy as a lever for the achievement of this goal. In response to this potential disconnect, state policy should address the issue of eligibility requirements and establish standards for access that are consistently applied to both high school and on-campus students.

The dichotomy between an ideal vision and actual practice manifests itself in the underlying assumptions and incentives that drive dual credit programs. While acknowledging the need for quality incentives, one cannot ignore that financial incentives may outstrip an institution's commitment to quality. A comprehensive state policy is needed to balance any potential disconnects between financial and quality incentives.

The topic of appropriate criteria for policies and procedures for dual credit courses often fuels spirited debates within the academic community. Without clear policies, dual credit programs have the potential to become entrepreneurial enterprises; yet, as Margaret Fincher-Ford (1997) correctly asserts, "Few works have been published that explain the process one would use to create a dual-credit program, the problems that will be encountered, the positive and negative experiences, and ultimately, recommendations and caveats."

This paper will use Missouri as a case study. We will review Missouri's historical context for offering dual credit courses in high schools, identify the state's key policy questions, and analyze a potential system transformation whereby disconnects associated with Missouri's dual credit policy could be resolved.

Background

Missouri has a diverse higher education system that seeks to balance the promotion of state policy within the state's rich tradition of local autonomy. In addition to 18 public two-year campuses and 13 public four-year campuses, Missouri is home to 26 major independent institutions. Approximately 281,000 students were enrolled in fall 1997. While separate boards exist for each institution, the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) serves as the state's planning agency. The CBHE assumes the major responsibility for the development of state policy for higher education, the recommendation of budgets for public institutions, and the distribution of regular reports to its General Assembly, the governor, and the public concerning questions of access, efficiency, and quality.

Designing advanced academic programs for high school students is not new for Missouri. In 1990, the General Assembly passed legislation permitting high school students both to enroll in college-credit courses and, at the same time, to be counted as attending high school for state-aid purposes. Immediately, institutional interest and activity in dual credit increased. In a position similar to that of other states, Missouri found itself in a policy void-with enabling legislation but with no prior identification of "dual credit" in previous policies governing distance learning delivery.

Initial policy discussions in Missouri in the early 1990s identified three major issues as being particularly relevant to the development of state policy for dual credit courses delivered to students in the secondary environment: college-level work, faculty qualifications, and structural issues. CBHE board-meeting highlights emphasize the key conclusions drawn from Missouri's first attempt to design a statewide dual credit policy.

- **College-level work.** The issue of college-level work was seen as being particularly germane to learning experiences in an environment external to the college or university offering the credit. Curricular congruence with courses similar to those offered on campus was identified as an ideal to be achieved. Course content and requirements were expected to be comparable with on-campus courses. Questions about student performance focused attention on ensuring the establishment and implementation of evaluation systems that could be used to demonstrate that high school students were able to perform at a level customarily demanded of college students taking the same course.

- **Faculty qualifications.** The background and training of faculty assigned to teach dual credit courses were identified as key elements for the maintenance of quality. Faculty teaching dual credit courses were to meet accreditation standards. In addition, it was agreed that faculty should be hired, evaluated, and retained using the same criteria that institutions used for regular faculty, teaching on-campus credit courses to college students. It was expected that the policy would remain consistent with changes in standards promulgated by the NCA. According to current NCA standards, an institution is expected to "employ a faculty that has earned from accredited institutions the degrees appropriate to the level of instruction offered by the institution." The combined impact of General Institutional Requirements #9 and #16 suggest that, in general, faculty teaching dual credit courses, especially those course credits that transfer toward higher degrees, should hold a graduate degree. In addition, faculty with general education teaching assignments should have completed at least 18 hours of graduate credit in the discipline being taught.

- **Structural issues.** The types of students given access to dual credit courses and the services provided to them were also perceived to affect overall quality. Extensive debates ensued about "mixed classes," i.e., classes including college-credit students and high school credit only students. Rural districts stressed the importance of "mixed classes" in helping to meet minimal enrollments as well as their potential in raising overall expectations. In contrast, others argued that mixed classes would lower the quality of instruction and the expectation for student performance. As a compromise, it was agreed that an assessment of student learning using some form of external evaluation would be required of all "mixed classes." Other structural issues involving quality control called for equalization of available student services, including access to library support and help from instructors outside of class similar to that available to on-campus students.

- **Summary of initial policy objectives.** In designing its initial policy, which was approved in February 1992, Missouri emphasized that dual credit course offerings were not meant to short-circuit the high school experience or to redress resource problems in secondary education. The awarding of high school credit to dual credit students was seen as an administrative convenience so students could meet high school graduation requirements and school districts could avoid the loss of funding based on average daily-attendance figures. Dual credit was perceived to be an important vehicle by which adequately prepared students could make an efficient and effective transition from high school to college. While regular reports about dual credit activity were not required, institutions were delegated the responsibility of keeping accurate records about institutional-level policies, procedures, and practices. Missouri's broad-based guidelines for dual credit courses emphasized the importance of ensuring a quality of instruction that would be similar to that received in on-campus courses by focusing on college-level work, faculty qualifications, and structural issues.

Diverse Applications

Despite these broad guidelines, a diverse array of institutional policies and practices has proliferated. While a number of programs have been successful, a loose policy environment has allowed for a disconnect between policy and practice. For some institutions, entrepreneurial incentives have resulted in large programs with limited quality control. The widespread proliferation of dual credit programs as well as the growing recognition that compliance with dual credit policy is less than ideal has placed the issue of dual credit at the forefront of the state policy-making process. The arguments surrounding dual credit spilled over into the state's annual Transfer Conference during the years following the adoption of the state's 1992 dual credit policy and sessions at this conference witnessed heated debate on the merits of dual credit programs.

Missouri policymakers found themselves in the crossfire between dual credit's true believers and adamant critics. Arguments tended to emphasize whether dual credit should be permitted at all. But dual credit is neither inherently good nor bad. As with any academic program, courses are only as good as the faculty delivering them and the academic standards demanded of students. Under the banner of dual credit, there are excellent courses equivalent to on-campus courses as well as substandard courses that are a poor substitute for collegiate-level work. With this in mind, Missouri policymakers are looking for ways to enhance dual credit as one form of advanced credit. The discussion thus evolved from whether dual credit is a worthy form of advanced credit to how to assure that the dual credit that is delivered in Missouri meets the standards of higher education.

Until 1996, policy discussions tended to resort to emotional arguments based on anecdotal evidence. Owing to the lack of solid data to inform policy development, Missouri policymakers took as their first order of business to determine the scope and magnitude of dual credit practices in the state. A 1996 Scope and Magnitude Survey provided a necessary context for policy discussions. This survey indicated that in FY 1996, a total of 29 institutions provided dual credit to approximately 25,000 duplicated headcount enrollments. About 80% of this activity was accounted for by the three largest programs. Among all institutions, there was considerable variability in teaching credentials required, programs for adjunct faculty, student access to college resources, and the extent to which dual credit courses were evaluated. Preliminary analysis from a 1998 update on scope and magnitude suggests that while the number of dual credit providers has remained fairly constant, the duplicated headcount enrollments have increased significantly to more than 41,000. A growing cadre of high school teachers (more than 1,700) have been appointed as adjunct faculty and are now delivering dual credit in high schools.

Given this context, Missouri's Coordinating Board for Higher Education has made review and revision to dual credit policy a major priority. Through a process of open dialogue, and based on information provided by statewide surveys, a set of draft dual credit policies was further discussed during FY 1998. These drafts have served as the premise for a formal process of policy revision.

During FY 1999, Missouri is working with a task force to develop a revised draft policy. In revising this policy, Missouri is committed to collecting and analyzing policies from other states, reviewing institutional responses to an updated scope and magnitude survey, and seeking additional institutional data on the performance of dual credit students. During the upcoming Statewide Transfer and Articulation Conference in February 1999 the academic community will have an opportunity to discuss policy issues in an open forum.

Since 1992, the range of discourse has shifted. Some original conflicts have been resolved and the development of practice has led to other questions. The state's current review of dual credit has identified a number of questions that center around a few central and interrelated themes.

- **Student eligibility.** The theme of student eligibility concerns both how to define standards of eligibility as well as how high to set minimum eligibility requirements. Thus, policymakers hope to identify appropriate eligibility measures, e.g., GPA, class level, a recommendation by a high school principal, and/or performance on external assessments. Policy on student eligibility should assure that dual credit students are qualified to meet the academic rigors of a college course. Also within the broad theme of eligibility are questions about the viability of a single standard for all students. In line with such questions, some have promoted the use of graduated eligibility requirements, i.e., different standards based on high school grade level or demonstrated academic ability.

  Questions about student eligibility are fundamentally questions about the purpose of dual credit. Though there is agreement about the broad aims of dual credit, the eligibility issues bring into focus both access and quality concerns. In this context, limits on the number of dual credit hours become an important policy question. Although ideally dual credit can be viewed as a head start to college for qualified students, a contrasting perspective views dual credit as a means to circumvent the college experience.

◇ **Structure.** Course structure is another theme in the current policy discussion. Like the issue of student eligibility, structure is viewed as a means of assuring a level of course quality that will satisfy transferability standards. In Missouri, the current debate on structure concerns such questions as when, if at all, "mixed classes" are appropriate, the involvement and responsibilities of on-campus faculty, how to assure adjunct faculty meet external accreditation standards, and the assignment of ultimate administrative responsibility for the delivery of dual credit courses.

Missouri policymakers have recognized that there are at least two different kinds of mixed classes. On the one hand are classes in which all students have adequate preparation but differ only in terms of their choice as to whether or not to take the course for college credit. On the other hand, particularly in rural settings, mixed classes include students of diverse ability levels receiving differential instruction. The distinction has to do with why the classes are mixed and bears strongly upon the nature of instruction provided in the course. Missouri hopes to identify these types of mixtures in policy and specify the conditions under which mixed classes are acceptable.

Discussion of structure also concerns recommendations for assigning oversight responsibility for dual credit programs. When using adjunct faculty, who should decide the content of the syllabus? What should be the role of departments of continuing education in an institution's dual credit program? Who should have the ultimate authority for the quality of dual credit courses? Missouri is looking for ways to assure the academic integrity of dual credit courses by ensuring a more direct role of on-campus faculty and the academic vice presidents in personnel and curricular decisions about an institution's program.

◇ **Quality.** Student eligibility and course structure can be conceived as prospective means of assuring course quality. Nevertheless, they may not be sufficient policy levers. Ideally, the transferability of dual credit courses should not be questioned. Missouri policymakers hope that by framing dual credit as a transfer and articulation issue, they may succeed in responding to the disconnect in "full faith in credit." In doing so, they will be able to identify dual credit within the context of existing credit transfer policies. The state's recently revised credit transfer policy assumes a student-centered perspective and directs sending institutions to act as advocates on behalf of transfer students. As institutions take responsibility for an effective transfer system, dual credit programs of questionable quality should be more easily identified.

Quality, as it pertains to dual credit courses, subsumes a number of other policy discussion points. The extent to which external assessment should be required of all students has become a major question. Some argue that in contrast to what is normally required in on-campus courses, the demand for external assessment of all students in dual credit courses is excessive. There is a press, however, that policy should stipulate external assessment because it is argued that dual credit takes place in an environment dominated by secondary school norms and values. Institutions may be less predisposed to rely on professional trust concerning program quality when there is such heavy reliance on high school teachers as adjunct faculty. Nevertheless, there is general agreement that systematic assessment for dual credit courses will help validate the quality of dual credit programs.

Underlying this broad agreement, and in line with structural concerns, is the notion that any course assessment plan should be designed by the institution and its faculty to be commensurate with its learning goals and objectives. This would include in-class evaluation examinations calibrated with on-campus experience.

Discussion of instructor qualifications is another approach to ensuring course quality. Since the primary standard of quality for dual credit is commensurability to on-campus courses, it is essential that accrediting agency standards should apply to all high school instructors delivering dual credit.

Conclusion

Historically, the dual credit policy dialogue in Missouri has taken place within a loose or disconnected policy environment. The current study suggests a system characterized by conflict, dialogue, and consensus-building. There are at stake a variety of interests that cover several multifaceted issues. Dual credit providers have recently formed a statewide dual credit consortium. The consortium is promoting a stronger policy environment involving clearly stated quality-control mechanisms. While much of the disparity in institutional practices can be analyzed in terms of institutional self-interest, this disparity may also be due to the latitude inherent in a disconnected policy environment. For this reason, as well as by virtue of the issues of student eligibility, course structure, and overall quality, Missouri policymakers are finding it useful to consider redesigning dual credit policy from the perspective of the consumer.

By emphasizing the student as a consumer, it is possible to frame student eligibility questions in terms of practicality and functionality. How many hours should a student be able to complete prior to being formally accepted by an institution of higher education? Addressing this policy issue from a student's perspective would emphasize the value of amassing dual credit prior to matriculation at a particular college or university. Structural policy questions can also be framed to emphasize the quality of service, including faculty credentials that should be provided to students. If the academic department has ultimate responsibility for course content and the academic vice president has the ultimate responsibility for program quality of on-campus programs, why should dual credit programs be treated differently? In the long run, dual credit students are not served well if their college credit is perceived to be second rate. Transfer and articulation of dual credit courses can also be advanced from a student-centered perspective. The state's overriding goal should be to facilitate cooperation between and among all postsecondary institutions offering dual credit courses on behalf of students, students who expect a coherent, consistent, and seamless educational system.

Recently, Missouri's K-12 system has begun to implement a system of incentives that provide students who score sufficiently high on state tests with tuition credit for enrollment in dual credit courses. Because increased demand for dual credit is anticipated and because the state hopes to facilitate broad institutional cooperation, it will be important to design principles of good practice and to collect data on student performance. These principles and data can then drive a regular systematic evaluation of dual credit programs in the future. It is thus important to design a comprehensive data collection system that will help students clearly identify dual credit programs of high quality.

Missouri's loose policy environment has allowed a diversity of practice not only to exist but also to be displayed openly. This loose policy environment has also shaped the policy discourse. Thus, much of the work of the Missouri Coordinating Board can be characterized as promoting ongoing discussion among the academic community. By promoting an open, inclusive, and meaningful discussion of its policies and by utilizing data to inform discussion, the academic community is being challenged to engage in continual reevaluation of its policies. Its purpose is to win buy-in and voluntary support for a more structured policy environment that does not necessarily carry the force of law but for which there is growing support and compliance. One consequence of such an arrangement is that the policy process is painfully slow. Nevertheless, through time and with the participation of the members of the higher educational community, an effective statewide dual credit policy can be formulated.

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Stronger Tools for School/University Collaboration

Mary McDonnell Harris
John Ettling

Tools for connecting the disconnects between schools and colleges have developed in sophistication over the past few years thanks to the efforts of the external funders of collaborative projects. In an interpretive review of the literature on school/college collaboration, Clark (1988) cites Wu as having credited anthropologist S. T. Kimball with specifying the following conditions for collaboration:

1. There is a threat from the outside.
2. There is an identification of a common problem.
3. There is a combination of the threat and the need to investigate the problem. (p. 50)

These conditions clarify the proposition that collaboration with schools enables colleges to demonstrate interest in recruitment of local students; continuity with the curriculum of the lower schools; awareness of needs for professional preparation of educators and other school personnel; and a desire to participate in local, state, and national systems of education in a climate where failure to demonstrate such fundamental interests can be politically devastating.

Following the lead of the AAHE School to College Collaboration and the Education Trust, the University of North Dakota prepared in 1993-94 an inventory of its activities that involved children and youth, ages O through 16. This report supplemented an NCA self-study completed in that same year and was shared with area schools and with the North Dakota Legislative Assembly as evidence of the university's service to the community. The 47 activities compiled were sponsored by many different offices and programs. The list, while certainly not exhaustive, included six major types of activity: service to schools, field experiences, projects, bureaus and centers, network, and publications.

The 1994 Survey of Activities

☐ **Service to schools**

Most common, comprising 30 percent of the list's entries, were services provided by university departments or program offices to schools or youth groups either on request or as part of an annual program directed especially to young people or their teachers. The Department of Geology, for example, is happy to share upon request its collection of rocks, bones, and fossils. The Office of Native American Programs will find members of the UND American Indian community to speak with groups of youth. The UND Athletic Department assigns basketball players to local schools, encouraging them to visit in classrooms and model healthy lifestyles that include attending UND basketball games. The University Program Council sponsors an annual Family Weekend that includes activities for student families with children of all ages.

☐ **Field experiences**

Almost as many of the activities on the list had as their primary purpose the provision of experience in the field to students in disciplines such as Communication Disorders, Counseling, Dietetics, Medicine, Music, Nursing, Physical Education, Teacher Education and Theatre Arts. A secondary benefit of these activities was service to the families and children served. An example from a course on family and community nursing paired students with families of young children identified as developmentally delayed or medically fragile. The student nurse visited the child and a parent at home, in the clinic, and at school or another institutional setting. Using data collected from the interviews and observations, the student wrote a plan of care that was critiqued by a supervisor. Music education students planned and carried out a music program for a local parochial school. The Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation ran a weekly gym for home schooled children. These activities were associated with one course in a program, were typically coordinated by one faculty member, and provided services without charge to the population served.

A few of the clinical experiences were more comprehensive, involving students throughout their enrollment in a program, engaging the support of multiple faculty members, and requiring either a charge for services or supplementary funding. The Department of Communication Disorders, for example, operated on campus a Speech and Hearing Clinic supported by funds raised in the community. The Department of Counseling maintained an ongoing partnership with The Village Family Center that involved exchange of faculty time for clinical supervision. The Department of Teaching and Learning's Elementary Education faculty formed a professional development school relationship with a local elementary school. A limited number of resident teachers at this site were paid as graduate assistants by the university through a contract with the school district. The Early Childhood Education Program provided both administrative and student teacher support to the University Children's Center, also supported by user fees and facilities provided by the Family Housing unit.

☐ Projects

Another category of activity serving children and youth was the project, typically externally funded for a period that determined program duration. Projects comprised approximately 15% of the activities in 1994. One of the largest was the North Dakota BRIDGES Project funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York with matching funds from a variety of programs of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction and Department of Human Services. Working with six lead schools and 20 partner schools throughout the state, BRIDGES worked for ten years with teachers, administrators, parents, and students to implement fully functioning middle schools. Another example, funded by a grant from the state Dwight D. Eisenhower program, enabled two faculty from the Department of Mathematics to offer summer workshops for teachers in two rural or reservation schools each summer and to evaluate their work through follow-up visits to classrooms. A third example, the NASA Regional Teacher Resources Center, maintained by the Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences with funding from NASA, provided free resources to K-12 teachers and students.

☐ Bureaus and centers

The bureau or center is typically maintained primarily with external funds but with sufficient stability for continuous operation and, although it may provide a training experience for college students, its primary purpose is direct service to clients. Examples from the 1994 compilation included the Children and Family Services Training Center in the Department of Social Work, which served as the training arm of the state's foster care system, offering programs for foster parents, foster care workers, guardians, and others. The Child Evaluation and Treatment program, a unit of the Rehabilitation Hospital of the UND School of Medicine, provided service to children with developmental disabilities, learning difficulties, psychological or emotional problems, communication disorders, and a wide range of physical disabilities. Bureaus and centers comprised about approximately 10% of the entries on the list.

☐ Network and publications

The remaining 10% of the entries fell in two categories: networks and publications. Entries in these categories typically served teachers or workers with children by providing a forum for sharing research and experience intended to influence policy or practice. *Insights into Open Education,* published by the College of Education and Human Development, for example, was intended to inspire teachers aspiring toward more holistic and integrated classroom practice. The Family Consortium, a network of faculty from disciplines with interest in children and families, served as a forum for exchange of research of common interest. The North Dakota LEAD Center, a consortium for school administrator development, was supported by time and resources from the Department of Educational Leadership. In this network, and others, the identity of the university was often subsumed to further the goal of a larger group.

Five Years Later

We are currently updating the 1994 compilation of UND activities involving children and youth. Although this work is not yet completed, some changes in the work it represents are already clear. Preliminary observations of the data include the following:

- Most of the activities complied in 1994 still exist although some have changed. A few of the projects ended with the termination of their funding, and others have taken their places.
- Faculty interest in such activity has grown. A volunteer Faculty Ambassador program, which involves faculty of every college, maintains a speakers bureau and visits schools on request. Recently this group coordinated two days of university-led instruction at a local middle school that was meeting in a temporary location after the Red River flood of 1997. The Faculty Ambassadors enabled teams of teachers to arrange their classrooms in a newly-completed building. Factors in the salience of this type of service include desire to preserve the sense of community that emerged at the time of the flood and faculty recognition that the combination of the flood and a declining North Dakota high school population poses a severe threat to the university.
- Although most of the field or clinical experiences associated with single classes in 1994 are still going on, the number and complexity of experiences that support whole programs have increased, and support structures for multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary programs are beginning. These structures tend to merge the categories of field or clinical experience, project, and network from the analysis of the 1994 data, because they involve a network of university and community members in a cluster of interactions whose initiation typically requires external funding and whose maintenance calls for ongoing exchange of resources.
- Although projects designed by a Lone Ranger faculty member still exist, many of today's opportunities to serve children and youth involve a nationally proven model that requires shared ownership and demonstration of willingness to meet conditions for institutionalization of the project. Examples include the National Writing Project, the Excellent Beginnings Program of the Plan for Social Excellence, and the Teachers as Scholars Program of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation.
- In the network and publication category, the university now participates in many more networks as part of the projects and transdisciplinary efforts mentioned above. Some of these networks sponsor publications, but the university is less likely than formerly to maintain networks or publications not affiliated with some wider group of collaborators.
- The current list blurs even more than the earlier one activities directed primarily to children and youth with those addressed to **workers with children and youth.** If the survey had asked respondents to identify activities directed toward workers with children and youth, a different set of activities, including a large number of credit and non-credit academic programs, would have emerged. Many such activities are coordinated by UND's Division of Continuing Education and, within the last year, the Grand Forks Area Teacher Center, which moved to campus from a public school location and has begun to coordinate such activities for local educators.

Conclusion

As the baccalaureate degree comes to replace the high school diploma as the entry point for the world of skilled work (King, 1998), tools for collaboration with schools will become increasingly the domain of the college. It is often the facilitators of such endeavors, the community of external funders, who have attempted to provide guideposts for collaborative activities. Recently published guides include *Learning to Collaborate* (1996), compiled from the Excellence in Education initiative of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; *A Guide to Promising Practices in Educational Partnerships* (1996) of the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement; and Turbowitz and Longo's (1997) reflection on the work at Louis Armstrong Middle School. The conclusions of these observers are remarkably similar, and their similar attempts to codify successful practice for collaborative activities call for attention because collaboration has the potential to clarify purposes, reconfigure resources and attract new ones, and change the nature of a national dialogue about how life-long learning is furthered by schools and colleges in a free society.

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By the Bootstraps: Beginning College–High School Relations

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Like many Illinois community colleges, Rock Valley College, a thirty-one year old institution serving the city of Rockford and a 1000 square mile district in northern Illinois, can trace its heritage to its high schools. Many of its original cadre of teachers were enticed away from district schools; many of its initial rules and regulations originated in the high schools. And like sister institutions in the state, the College had a long, difficult time not being viewed as just "two more years" of high school.

Perhaps because of this heritage, the College worked diligently to free itself of its ancestry, and in the process became intentionally (or unintentionally) "disconnected" from its seventeen high schools. To be sure, RVC recruited at all the area schools, sponsored annual college nights, conducted high school art competitions to attract local talent to the College, and the like. But the thinking at the College seldom moved to consider higher levels of cooperation; administrative leadership for years seemed to have a *de facto* "keep clear" policy operating somewhere in its unwritten rules.

All that is changing. New leadership at the College and the growing awareness that we are all in the same game of educating our citizens have helped usher in a new era of cooperation. This brief paper outlines some of the directions that have been begun in the last three years, and suggests how much might be achieved in the Rock Valley College district and in other community districts across the state and nation...if college and high schools recognize the mutual benefit of "connecting."

Recognizing Differences

Rock Valley College's vow to connect does not in itself create connections, especially when the various high schools are so vastly different. Four public schools are complemented by four private institutions in the city of Rockford itself, some but not all of which are religious in persuasion. Three large schools in neighboring cities, both relatively close to the College, are matched by six rural and considerably smaller schools scattered at some distance across the district. Such diversity makes it extremely difficult for any postsecondary institution to formulate a clear policy to govern relationships. And it did not help that one of the high schools was itself in three other community college districts, creating a kind of schizophrenic mentality in that high school district. Rock Valley College needed to realize that it had to work in vastly different ways with its different feeder schools to the mutual gain of all concerned. A vow to connect, in other words, had to be played out in many different ways for its many diverse high school constituents.

Connections: Facilities Agreements

Rock Valley College has concluded a facilities agreement with the four Rockford high schools. This intergovernmental agreement was at first a simple agreement to share, at no cost, buildings and other property. Thus the annual meeting/retreat of Rockford School District 205 administration can take place at the College. College tennis meets can be regularly scheduled at the courts located at Guilford High School, a short mile away from the College. When a recent, freak power outage plunged the College gym in total darkness, the event could be transferred immediately to Guilford, where power remained mysteriously intact and where, in a brief fifteen minutes, the basketball game resumed. And when the College came up empty handed in its efforts to secure a cable television channel, Rockford District 205 offered time each day on its own station. Not only has the cooperation helped to create a more diverse educational broadcasting day for local residents, the two partners have also discovered that they could lend important equipment to one another for the purpose of improved production and delivery of programs, thereby saving limited budgets for other purposes.

Most recently, atmosphere encouraged by the joint facilities agreement has led to a very significant long term effort. Rockford School District 205 has entered into the sale of/cooperative utilization agreement for a 131,000 square foot high school building that essentially had been unused for several years and will now become Rock Valley College's second campus. In this facility, the College will provide vocational-technical education for high school students and college students; it will also enable the College to consolidate numerous programs currently located in rental properties throughout Rockford. A major gain for the Rockford School District: a commitment to develop tuition-free opportunities for its students to take dual credit classes in both vocational and college-transfer programs.

Connections: Dual Credit Instruction

Rock Valley College has begun to explore dual credit opportunities with Rockford and with other district schools. While the current efforts with Rockford have been most successful in the tech prep areas, the College has proposed (as yet unsuccessfully) to provide College-level work for the well-prepared high school junior and senior. More successfully, RVC has for two years provided college-level calculus and freshman composition for students in the Harlem School District, during the high school day when many more students could take advantage of the opportunities. Efforts to replicate this arrangement at Oregon High School (some 40 minutes away) are underway; the spring 1999 effort to deliver the first dual credit course there had to be aborted because of insufficient enrollment. There are clear impediments to this cooperation: faculty bargaining agreements, logistics associated with the length and structure of the high school day, and student readiness for college-level work. Expansion of dual credit instruction, while desirable, will require redoubled efforts to "connect" and discover mutual benefits.

One related initiative warrants mention. The College has designed an Orientation to College class for at-risk juniors in both the Rockford and Harlem high schools. The goal of this effort is to provide students with an overview of what college is all about and how to be successful. Students learn about how to study, how to look for the "right" college, how to procure financial aid. Those who eventually come to Rock Valley College will receive one college credit for their efforts; those who attend other institutions will do so with a surer footing and a fuller sense of what is expected of them.

Connections: Shared Faculty

The general cooperation between the College and its district high schools has expanded to new, exciting levels in the area of shared faculty. In part driven by labor shortages, the College has agreed to "lend" important electronics faculty to one district high school: during the first semester a College faculty member went to the high school to deliver instruction, while during the next semester the high school students came to the College. Another initiative, again in the electronics area but involving another high school, has students coming to Rock Valley College during their senior year for instruction that the school can no longer provide because of faculty shortages and equipment deficiencies. Rock Valley faculty become *de facto* high school teachers in this program, which grants students high school credit for the instruction received at the College. Should these students attend Rock Valley after graduation, they receive advanced credit toward their college degree for this same work.

Finally, one very new and promising shared faculty activity has a College English faculty released from some normal instructional duties to be a regular consultant/resource person for two days a week at a special school for behaviorally challenged students. Here he provides assistance in technology, helps students write resumes, provides guest lectures for regular classroom teachers, and is generally available to be of assistance as needed. In turn, he is gaining for the College a better sense of high school outcomes standards and actual achievements, which will better enable the College to prepare to treat an ever-changing profile of entering student, and is renewing his commitment to developmental education.

Connections: Joint Grant-Funded Activities

The College has reached out to connect with its high schools in a number of grant activities. Two are worthy of mention here. The first is an effort on the part of the College, in conjunction with a HECA (Higher Education Cooperation Act) grant at Eastern Illinois University, to identify minorities at two high schools who will be mentored and otherwise encouraged to study to become educators. To further this effort, the College funded two faculty, one from the college and one from the lead high school, to attend a leadership conference. The second is a recently concluded activity involving three outlying and four city high schools in a LSTA (Illinois Library Services Technology Act) grant to introduce these institutions into the how's and why's of information literacy. This highly successful grant enabled dozens of faculty and librarians and hundreds of students to get hands-on training with state-of-the-art electronic library retrieval software, and to explore asynchronous conferencing approaches to creating learning communities.

Connections: Joint Meetings of High School and College Staffs

Initially this initiative involved the bringing together of key math and English faculty members to discuss joint problems and possible cooperations for addressing these problems. Currently, the President's Council of Rock Valley College and the Rockford District 205 Superintendent's Cabinet meet in joint session at least twice a year to discuss the status of various projects and to commit to new areas of cooperation. These sessions need to expand to include other schools in the district, for much is learned by face-to-face confrontation of key educational issues. Rock Valley's President is systematically visiting high schools in the district to become better acquainted with their distinct needs and to identify individual levels of connection between them and their community college.

Conclusions

If there is a single conclusion, it is that connecting is time-consuming, hard work, and does not always immediately bear fruit. But the Rock Valley College experience is that there is fruit, which promises to be even more abundant in the future. Initial successes have often been a result of the personalities involved, but have become self-sustaining after both sides discover the mutual gain. At the heart of the College's continuing efforts will be the sincere belief now that efforts to reach out to its high schools are a significant way for a comprehensive community college to meet is full obligation to its community. The tragedy, perhaps, is that the College has begun so recently to meet this obligation. The promise: we have so many eager partners who, like us, see no value in remaining disconnected.

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Extending the Connection: The Indiana University M.S./ Walden University Ph.D. Collaboration

Brent Poppenhagen
Henry Merrill

Eight years ago, Indiana University (IU) and Walden University (WU) pioneered a new connection that focused on library information services (Shaffer & Weaver, 1996). Since its founding, this unique cooperative initiative has blossomed to include a range of research, service, faculty, alumni, facilities, and service arrangements (Morrison & Walker, 1998). The newest development from this now well established connection is a distance learning academic program collaboration, a first for both universities. Focused on the WU Ph.D. Specialization in Adult Education Leadership and the IU M.S. in Adult Education offered by the School of Continuing Studies (SCS), the coordinated programs share curriculum, distance learning technology, faculty, and marketing strategies. Now in its first year of operation, the collaboration provides a range of interesting challenges to be identified and described in this paper.

The Context of Institutional Cultures

It may be difficult to imagine two institutions more diverse in their academic, faculty, administrative, and student cultures than are Indiana University and Walden University. Indiana University represents a classification of major American research universities devoted to research, teaching, and service, and on an even broader plane a complex system of institutions devoted to a comprehensive teaching and learning mission. Walden University represents a much newer, unique, and limited institutional mission devoted to social change and development through research and learning at the graduate level. Despite their diverse missions and physical attributes, the two institutions, and specifically their relevant sub-units, may be compared.

Institutional Characteristics Compared

WU	IU-SCS
Small (1400 students)	Large (23,200 students)
Graduate Only	Undergraduate and Graduate
Entrepreneurial	Entrepreneurial
Process Team Organization	Process Team Organization
Contract Faculty Model	Mixed Faculty Model
Flat Governance Structure	Flat SCS Governance Structure (Tall University Structure)
Mature Adult Student Population	Mature Adult Student Population
Diverse Distance Learning Programs	Diverse Distance Learning Programs
Dispersed Residency Model	Limited Residency Model

Perhaps surprisingly, many similar structures and processes exist in comparison while other, more diverse, elements seem incongruous. Institutional characteristics both similar and incongruous contribute to the challenge of program collaboration.

The Challenge

Implicit in the curriculum plan and, indeed, the primary motivation for collaboration is the common ground provided by adult education as a professional field of study. Despite this common foundation, a range of challenges appear, based as they are on the need to establish an interinstitutional environment through which programs can be delivered. It is, then, the development of an interinstitutional environment for program delivery that represents the primary and ongoing challenge for successful collaboration. Among the challenges that emerge are the need to facilitate marketing and recruitment, matriculation and new student orientation, program and curriculum coordination, faculty training and student mentoring, registration and record keeping, student progress and assessment, and fiscal arrangements related to cross registration, faculty compensation, student aid, and student fees.

To illuminate these challenges better and to provide a context for discussion of specific collaboration issues, the section that follows describes the Ph.D. program and its collaborative components.

Program Collaboration

Focus for this IU/WU collaboration is on the WU Ph.D. in Education (adult education leadership specialization). The Ph.D. program employs a distance learning format that uses writing intensive, guided learning contracts known as Knowledge Area Modules (KAMs) and Indiana University courses selected from the M.S. in Adult Education program. The 128 quarter credit hour program includes up to 42 credit hours of IU course work delivered electronically. Admission to the Ph.D. program requires an earned master's degree from a regionally accredited institution, among other requirements.

Student Eligibility and Program Requirements

Eligibility	Requirements
Graduates of the IU M.S. in Adult Education	86 qtr. cr. hrs. to Ph.D. degree completion
Graduates of a master's degree program in adult education from institutions other than IU	86-128 qtr. cr. hrs. to Ph.D. degree completion (students take up to 42 hours of IU course work)
Graduates of a master's degree program in a relevant field other than adult education	128 qtr. cr. hrs. to Ph.D. degree completion (students take 42 hours of IU course work)

All students, regardless of their matriculation status, complete four guided learning contracts (KAMs) totaling 56 credit hours and a traditional research dissertation for 30 credit hours. Students are guided in developing their unique program of study and in its conduct by Faculty Mentors with primary expertise in the field of adult education including both IU faculty under contract to WU and WU contract faculty. Neither the IU M.S. nor the WU Ph.D. degrees are jointly awarded. While components of the IU M.S. degree are articulated within the WU Ph.D., no components unique to the WU Ph.D. are articulated within the IU M.S.

Selected Issues for Discussion

Six issues are identified for discussion below, each selected because it represents a key to early planning and implementation efforts undertaken in an environment where diverse institutional characteristics exacerbate the development of interinstitutional arrangements needed for support in program delivery. Each issue is presented from the perspective of both the WU and the IU cultures.

1. Creating a concept for collaboration based on diverse delivery models

WU: Integration of IU courses into what had been an exclusively writing intensive, guided learning contract based Ph.D. program represented for Walden University a major cultural shift resulting in the University's first mixed (KAM/course) program. The concept employed was that of course equivalency, which required the view that a constellation of selected courses could serve as equivalent to three student directed KAM learning experiences in adult education. Issues related to this concept emerged from several quarters including WU faculty ranks whose mentoring role and compensation would be limited by the introduction of courses. From the University Registrar came issues related to credit transfer policy (a practice not generally accommodated by the University's KAM based programs). Walden University's fiscal affairs officers identified issues related to tuition revenue (its loss to IU), and student aid (who is responsible during periods of cross registration?).

IU: The IU M.S. program faced the challenge of accomplishing two significant projects simultaneously. The first project required the adaptation of courses to an Internet-based delivery mode from what had been a mixed delivery mode within the state of Indiana using a combination of two-way interactive video sessions with the instructor regularly visiting those sites during the semester and using electronic tools (fax, e-mail, discussion forums, and chat sessions). Adapting the core courses for online delivery anywhere in the world made possible the collaboration with WU.

The second project is the actual collaboration with WU. The IU program model remains course-based using a traditional semester format. The impact of this collaboration with WU is viewed as establishing student service processes within existing systems to deliver courses to WU students. Many of these systems are in place since the SCS has been delivering associate's and bachelor's degrees in General Studies and Independent Study courses (in traditional correspondence format) world-wide for many years.

2. Rethinking, redesigning, repackaging curriculum for shared use

WU: WU delivers two course-based graduate programs via the Internet but has never mixed KAM and course structures in a single program. For some faculty, the substitution of courses, perceived as being more directed, as opposed to the University's traditional and highly self-directed KAM model represents an academic advising challenge. For administrators, including academic counselors and Registrar's office personnel, as well as for faculty and students, the process of planning for and then integrating semester system course work with quarter system KAM development has provided an ongoing challenge.

IU: The primary focus for IU has been redesigning the curriculum for Internet-based delivery, which serves a dual purpose making the M.S. degree program available for the first time outside of Indiana while facilitating the Adult Education Leadership specialization for WU. The process has been evolutionary, moving through video-conferencing instruction, supplemented with other electronic tools, to Internet-based courses that allow participants more self-direction and responsibility for creating and meeting learning outcomes with the guidance of the facilitator and within the framework of course objectives and competencies.

3. Developing a collaborative faculty for Ph.D. mentoring

WU: Four core WU faculty in adult education have welcomed the addition of IU adult education faculty (under contract to WU) and have served in mentoring their IU colleagues through orientation to the WU Ph.D. program. A potential exists for WU faculty to serve the IU M.S. program in instructional roles at some time in the future.

IU: Two IU adult education faculty have participated in the established WU process to learn the KAM-based model so that they may mentor WU adult education specialization students. Other individuals from within existing IU faculty ranks or IU alumni with appropriate qualifications may also be identified as potential faculty as additional mentors are required to serve a growing student population within the WU specialization.

4. Who does what for whom and how: student services

WU: As a general rule, WU retains responsibility for its students. In this way, financial aid, academic advising and tuition payment remain with the students' home institution even when a student is registered for IU courses. WU student service personnel act primarily as information and data providers to IU student service systems as with, for example, course registration. Outstanding issues include course registration time lines, at both IU and WU, establishing Web-based registration on the WU side, billing for tuition and fees (IU) and payment to IU (WU).

IU: IU's initial experience used a small number of students to pilot SCS student service processes for registration and course access based on information provided through the WU Registrar. WU, as the students' home institution, is responsible for administering all financial aid for WU students. Access to library services in support of course work provides an interesting challenge as WU students already receive limited IU library services through the two institutions' existing library service agreement. This agreement, however, differs in service level from that provided by IU to its own distance learning students.

5. **Who pays what to whom and when: fiscal arrangements**

WU: Tuition and fee payments to IU for course registrations are the responsibility of WU acting on behalf of its students. Billing by IU SCS to WU follows the normal IU drop/add period and requires payment within 30 days. Potential concerns for WU include IU tuition and fee changes over time. It should be noted that WU students pay tuition on a fixed rate, quarterly basis rather than on the basis of credit hours for which the student is registered.

IU: A special challenge is experienced by IU SCS in recognizing and establishing student records, including course registration records, for WU students. WU students do not represent a typical class of student registrant for SCS and, in turn, require special efforts for tracking, for record maintenance, and for tuition billing.

6. **Developing strategies for marketing, student recruitment, and publications**

WU: Cooperation in marketing, student recruitment, and publications was among the earliest intents related to this IU/WU collaboration. WU will potentially benefit from access to currently enrolled IU M.S. students within Indiana and ultimately beyond the State's borders as well as to M.S. program alumni throughout the State of Indiana. Issues include development of IU and WU web site information, distribution of print materials, ad placement and content, conference and exhibit coordination, and coordination of marketing and communication efforts in general.

IU: For IU SCS, the WU collaboration represents an opportunity to share in WU's established, broad-based national marketing efforts. SCS completed an organizational restructuring during 1998-99 with an emphasis on increasing internal collaboration through process team organization. SCS-wide marketing plans will now coordinate with WU on this specific collaboration to develop joint representation of the M.S. and Ph.D. among professional organizations, on the SCS web site, and in placing articles in appropriate publications. Currently, cross-referral has been implemented within marketing materials produced by each institution. The development of marketing materials produced jointly may be part of this mix in the future.

Conclusion

The IU/WU collaboration in the conduct of a Ph.D. specialization in adult education leadership was planned beginning early in the 1997-98 academic year. Marketing efforts began following agreement on a Memorandum of Understanding in July 1998. Student enrollment in the Ph.D. program began on September 1, 1998, and totals twelve students after four months of operation. While many systems and procedures intended to facilitate the collaboration remain to be tested, the period of program operation to date has surfaced a range of issues and challenges being faced by both IU and WU. Despite their diverse size, structures, missions, and cultures, the collaboration has functioned effectively in its early stages and offers a cautiously optimistic perspective for other institutions, perhaps equally diverse, who wish to consider degree program collaborations.

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Opportunities for Connection in Doctoral Education: Students, Technology, and Collaboration

Ronald Leach
Joanne Burrows
Rebecca Libler
Rebecca Nickoli

This session examines the development of an innovative doctoral program in Higher Education Leadership at Indiana State University designed to meet the educational needs of working higher educational professionals in the state of Indiana. The presentation describes the development and delivery of a curriculum grounded in a scholar/practitioner cohort model that incorporates synchronistic and asynchronistic distance education experiences, campus-based weekend seminars, and supervised field experiences. The session will explore how Ivy Tech State College's desire to upgrade its professional and administrative staff created opportunities that contributed to the program's development and successful implementation.

Background

The expansion and diversification of American higher education during the past four decades has fostered parallel expansion and diversification within the administrative structures and staffs of colleges and universities. The need for effective leaders is an increasingly critical issue for colleges and universities. Professional and administrative staff members require sophisticated knowledge and skills to perform effectively in the current environment of rapid change. Graduate programs in higher education and student affairs, which emerged to meet these institutional needs, are often oriented to full-time graduate students. Professionals already working within collegiate settings and seeking to advance their professional preparation often find themselves cut off from these academic programs by the barriers of space and time.

Program Development

Indiana State University's Department of Education Leadership, Administration, and Foundations has offered a Ph.D. program in Educational Administration since the early 1970's with a primary purpose of preparing educational leaders for a variety of settings in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. In an attempt to provide better access to graduate education, the program has developed over the years with the inclusion of offering distance learning on the Indiana Higher Education Television Network System (IHETS) and creating a Wednesday Residency. In addition to attracting students who would become public school leaders, the program attracted a number of higher education administrators as well.

Based on this experience, and armed with the knowledge that a new faculty member with experience and credentials in higher education would soon join it, the department began to explore how it could expand its offerings in higher education leadership. In the Spring of 1997, this effort was greatly accelerated by the fact that an Indiana institution, Ivy Tech State College, had a desire to upgrade its professional and administrative staff. During the previous year Ivy Tech had conducted surveys of faculty and staff at its 22 campuses to gauge the level of interest in pursuing a doctoral degree. More than 250 Ivy Tech personnel responded, a number of whom indicated interest in a doctoral level degree in Educational Administration. Ivy Tech formed a study committee to address the need for advanced degrees and contacted Indiana institutions that offered the desired degrees. Several universities responded; however, Indiana State's response offered the opportunity to develop a new specialty in higher education leadership that would be delivered via distance education, which proved most appealing to Ivy Tech faculty and staff.

Ivy Tech State College offered more than just administrative development assistance. The College extended its typical tuition reimbursement policy to provide total reimbursement, agreed to serve as "mentors" for the internships, and gave students time away from work to participate in distance-delivered courses, internships, and on-campus seminars at Indiana State.

This chance for collaboration and connection between Indiana State University and Ivy Tech State College created two opportunities that contributed to the successful implementation of a new program in Leadership in Higher Education. First, the connection provided an opportunity for Ivy Tech State College representatives to collaborate with Indiana State University faculty in the conceptualization of program components. Second, the connection provided a readily identifiable and easily accessible pool of potential students for Indiana State University to draw upon. Discussions were held on program components, internships, mentoring, and program delivery.

In order to meet this new educational need in a creative fashion that provided both quality and access, the department and the university had to rethink a number of current practices and policies. The department, working with the School of Education, School of Graduate Studies, and the central administration, concentrated on redefining a Ph.D. program to meet the needs of working professionals. Some of the issues to be dealt with included: redefining residency requirements to accommodate a distance delivery mode, developing a new specialization with a targeted core curriculum, reviewing policies on required and elective courses, and acquiring staffing and other resources.

Program Curriculum and Delivery

The program's curriculum focuses on the acquisition of theoretical and practical knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for preparing scholar/practitioners to lead institutions of higher learning in the 21st century. Graduates of the program are prepared for leadership positions in a variety of settings including four-year institutions, two-year technical colleges, and community colleges. The program is designed for post-master's degree students who are currently employed. Studies and doctoral dissertations are directed toward problems of practice and issues in higher education.

Students are admitted into a doctoral cohort and will complete the curriculum as a community of learners. The curriculum has a basic core, a core of advanced studies, and an internship component. Although designed for working professionals, the rigorous curriculum demands a full commitment of time and energy for a two-year period of coursework followed by a period of time devoted to preparation for proficiency exams, preliminary examinations, and completion of the dissertation.

The program includes a core of field-based experiences spanning three semesters. The internships are designed to provide supervised experiences for doctoral students, usually in the area they wish to develop further experience. The internships, along with the coursework, are intended to develop scholar/practitioners who bring a reflective perspective to strategic leadership and problem solving in higher education. Internships provide students with an opportunity to acquire additional professional experience and to gain firsthand insights on administrative practices, problems, and issues in higher education.

The primary mode for delivering courses is through interactive television at a distance, weekends on campus, and Summer seminars. Additional information technologies such as the World Wide Web, e-mail, listservs, and audio-conferencing are also used to link students and faculty to each other. Students are required to have access to a computer with an Internet connection and e-mail capability so they can interact with faculty and other students about course and internship experiences.

Conclusion

The Higher Education Leadership Program is nearing the completion of its second year of operation. Students in the first cohort are finishing their second year of course work and preparing for preliminary examinations. Students in the second cohort are completing their first year of course work. Program faculty have begun to assess the program. The department has requested evaluative information from students and intern mentors relating to curricular content, quality of teaching, internships, and student services. This information will be used for the purposes of program and process revision. Work has already begun on curriculum review and discussions will occur on other issues that have been identified in the program thus far.

Note: Ivy Tech State College is a public, statewide, open-access, community-based, technical college serving the state of Indiana.

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Partnering a Graduate Degree Program Adler School of Professional Psychology and Robert Morris College

Mark Stone
Vincent Norton

Background

The idea of a collaborative master's degree between these two institutions surfaced in 1996. Although their missions and degree offerings vary considerably, both institutions found immediate common ground and an excellent spirit of cooperation. This paper shares the vision, outlines the steps, points out the potential pitfalls, and details the delivery of a program that has enrolled 30 graduate students in its first year of operation.

Goals

A collaborative master's degree appealed to Robert Morris College (RMC) for several reasons. The first and most important was the opportunity to gain the experience of delivering graduate level coursework. This experience could prove invaluable at some future juncture if the undergraduate degree institution were to pursue authority to offer its own master's degree.

Secondly, graduate coursework would be appealing to faculty members. This attraction was significant, given the College's desire to employ more Ph.D. faculty–who could be challenged by the opportunity to lead graduate students.

Finally, graduate level courses would assist the College is shedding the "secretarial school" image that still plagued Robert Morris College. At the same time, baccalaureate degree graduates could now elect to stay on and complete the unique weekend degree while working full-time. Alumni could also be invited to return and employees would have another option for graduate course work–especially student services workers.

A collaborative master's degree appealed to the Adler School to supplement its other graduate degree programs. Its development followed a year of conducting focus groups to determine the need for such a degree concentration and to ascertain the coursework suitable to such a degree. Adler conducted these focus groups in several locations in the Chicago area to determine the qualities that employers wanted in this area. Focus groups composed of Adler alumni who were working in this area were also conducted in order to determine aspects of their past training found relevant in their jobs. Adler School psychologists/faculty frequently consult in this area to business and industry and their input was also solicited.

Pitfalls

Initially, resistance and reluctance to change prevented both institutions from reaching easy agreements. Discussions of "Whose calendar?" "What tuition?" "Who would keep the records?" "Who is paying the faculty? And on what scale?" would monopolize strategy and brainstorming sessions.

This continued as long as the program was viewed as a "50-50" joint degree. A turning point came when it was decided that it would be a 60-40 program with Adler taking the lead. After all, Adler had authority to offer master's degrees.

This meant Adler would be responsible for the admissions acceptance decision. It also meant Adler would house the student records. The grading scale would be Adler's, etc. Quickly, the discussions were simplified. It would be the Adler academic calendar. Adler would collect the tuition. Adler would award the degree.

In retrospect, the program might not be alive today if it had continued on an equal basis. Clearly one institution needs to take the lead, and one must be content to win "best supporting" actor in the Emmy's of collegiate accolades.

Program Design

The success discovered in this area revolved around the immediate willingness to commend each institution as being "expert" in its field. Robert Morris College professed to know nothing about counseling and Adler readily admitted its knowledge of the business world was lacking. In fact, it may have been this acknowledgement that continued to fuel the fire. More than once key Adler personnel would proclaim the need for mental health workers to understand business. This agreement greatly assisted the process of curriculum layout. Once it was determined how many business courses could be included and how many counseling courses were required, the job of selecting the right courses and adapting course content was turned over to subject experts. Senior academic personnel at both institutions were able to decide the most appropriate content to include given the desired outcome of graduates.

Delivery

At this point the think tank was closed. Now the real work would begin. RMC would do the marketing; design the collateral materials; place the ads; send the mail; and pay the related bills, but direct all inquiries to Adler. Drawing the line in this fashion translated into further success. RMC admissions personnel did not need to learn the intricacies of a new program. Instead their experienced marketers could focus on generating inquires that were best served by Adler admissions staff, an admissions staff that was used to selling a weekend program, accustomed to deciphering the needs of a graduate student and comfortable with admissions requirements, test scores, entering GPA's, etc.

One of the most successful sources of students was Adler's existing database of prospective students. This myriad of names yielded approximately one-half of eventual matriculants.

While the admissions and marketing departments were recruiting students, the academic administration set out to recruit faculty. Because the weekend delivery meant a class would meet all day Saturday, RMC felt the need to hand-pick faculty. Any negative of teaching all day Saturday was quickly overshadowed by the decision to count the graduate course as being equivalent in a teaching load of two undergrade courses. This move brought the best instructors forward, contributing further to the success of the program.

Evaluation

Current evaluation suggests the program has been successful for the students, and the positive feedback bodes well for further growth. Each institution has benefited from this collaboration and, to date, the feedback indicates we are meeting our collective goals.

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This Train Is Bound For Glory

Wayne D. Merrell
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[Author's note: In order to illustrate the concept of "connecting the disconnects" as presented in the Annual Meeting, the authors have compared the numerous disconnected stakeholders utilizing a railroad analogy. Any relationship to a genuine railroad is purely coincidental...]

The College

Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC), a comprehensive community college located in central Iowa, is the largest of the state's 15 community colleges. It is comprised of five campuses with a combined enrollment of 12,000 FTE students. The faculty serve 60,000 continuing education clients annually in addition to providing industry and business training for a revenue of approximately $11 million in FY98.

Introduction to the Specific Problem

The CEO of Maytag Corporation met with the president of DMACC in February 1998 to discuss problems associated with locating "skilled workers," i.e., qualified manufacturing employees. As a result of this meeting, DMACC conducted a comprehensive study of the 26 largest firms in central Iowa to quantify the number of workers they will require in the near future. Data from the study indicated that by the year 2005, these 26 firms alone will be compelled to locate approximately 20,000 additional or replacement skilled workers. Subsequent interviews with various focus groups regarding the problems associated with locating and retaining skilled workers led DMACC personnel to classify concerned stakeholders into the following categories:

- The public at large
- Business leaders
- College personnel
- Chambers of commerce
- High school counselors
- Parents
- State legislators

Each of the entities mentioned above, as well as others, serves as an individual stakeholder struggling to do his/her part to reach a very similar end: growth of Iowa's business economy and improvement of her citizens' quality of life. These are separate entities, representing diverse interests, possessing varied resources, lacking a coordinated timetable, but all trudging towards the same destination.

The imperative to provide nearly 20,000 skilled workers to employers in central Iowa within the next six years dictates that this collection of disparate, disconnected interest groups be organized and connected as quickly and as efficiently as possible in order for them to reach their common destination. They needed an organizer, a conductor.

The Conductor

DMACC accepted the role of conductor. DMACC personnel have connected groups, combined and organized efforts, and partnered with these somewhat disparate groups of people through execution of an innovative training alliance based upon its Skills 2000 study and subsequent ACE (Accelerated Career Education) program. A detailed explanation of the Skills 2000 study and ACE program will be presented during the Annual Meeting.

The Tracks

"Tracks" in this analogy may be compared to a common method whereby DMACC assisted the various groups (cars) to reach their common destination. A successful pilot-test program was initiated this past June in association with the John Deere Corporation, numerous other business leaders, the public at large, high schools, the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, and DMACC personnel. The following are components of a coordinated, accelerated education program geared to address the challenges associated with the lack of skilled workers:

- revisit Tech Prep and School-to-Work initiatives to quantify their success and implementation effectiveness;
- review available K-6 instructional modules that introduce students to industrial careers;
- identify and support areas in the above K-6 curriculum that could be bolstered;
- infuse state funding to develop a K-12 curriculum involving meaningful field trips and directed industry studies;
- review apprenticeship programs;
- develop customized two-year degrees constructed by community college personnel with specific businesses serving as the advisory board—with guaranteed jobs upon successful completion of the program (the ACE program); and
- coordinate and sustain a media compaign designed to encourage the Iowa public to take advantage of vocational/occupational education and training.

The Iowa state legislature will soon review a bill presented by these combined stakeholders requesting an initial $80 million to assist the stakeholders in their efforts to provide specialized academic and training programs geared toward achieving the objectives stated above. In essence, all that was required to get this particular legislative initiative on the tracks was a common destination shared by a large group of organized constituents.

The Cars

The concept of partnering is illustrated through use of a railroad analogy. Each of the entities mentioned above may be represented by a individual car in a railroad train. Within each car there is a group of people (stakeholders), with a similar agenda or motivation, a leader, a timetable, a direction, and a destination. Given enough time and resources each car would probably reach its destination, more or less intact. This is a cultural representation of a common method of achieving initiatives in a community, i.e., accomplishments are the result of the efforts of an individual champion or charismatic leader motivating a group. It works.

However, when there are several groups within a community experiencing the effects of the same problem, they must combine their efforts in order to proceed effectively. Otherwise chaos prevails with the result that the participants experience varying levels of satisfaction at the conclusion.

A good conductor recognizes that there are various types of cars in the train that should be handled differently. The "cars" represented below have their own personalities and should be treated with care.

- The public at large require life-long training and skills upgrades in order to stay competitive in their careers and retain an acceptable standard of living.
- Business leaders, while concerned with an immediate lack of skilled workers, often are unaware of the great extent of future workforce deficits or of potential worker pools.
- Community college personnel tend to focus on traditional vocational/occupational education programs.
- Chambers of commerce focus on enticing prospective businesses to their respective communities, regardless of the increasingly difficulty in locating workers.

- ○ High school counselors most often encourage students to seek a four-year university degree regardless of the possibilities of gainful employment and disregarding the availability of excellent manufacturing occupations requiring less than a four-year degree.
- ○ Parents encourage their children to aspire to a four-year university degree unaware of the multitude of outstanding vocational/occupational programs available at technical and community colleges.
- ○ State legislators provide prodigious funding amounts for university programs while generally granting significantly less funding for community college occupational programs.

The Train

The cars were identified. A conductor was accepted. There was a common destination. Only a few tasks remained (in this analogy, at least): organizing the train and clearing the tracks. DMACC personnel found that the "cars" were quite willing to join the train once they recognized that they could reach their destination more effectively by doing so. Many brought additional resources with them, e.g., funding, facilities, faculty, and even better, ideas that help to ensure success.

Caution!

There were more than a few hazards that had to be identified. One of the first serious hazards was the false assumption that DMACC personnel had all the answers. As a matter of fact, DMACC didn't know many of the questions. A successful partnership with diverse groups requires the sublimation of academic ego—a recognizance that the dynamic academy must be a learning organization in order to serve its energetic community.

This is a very long and somewhat tedious journey leading to a common destination: ensuring the growth of the state's business economy and improving its citizens' quality of life. A strategic plan of action, including appropriate detail, is essential to its success.

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Connecting to Develop Curriculum: the Manufacturing Workforce Collaborative Project

Ann Alexander
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The Manufacturing Workforce Collaborative Project was conceived by a collaboration of organizations including the Center of Occupational Research and Development (CORD), the National Coalition of Advanced Technology centers (NCATC), the Iacocca Institute at Lehigh University, and Lucent Technologies. The goal of this project was to determine whether community colleges can collaborate electronically across geographic and institutional boundaries to respond quickly to workplace needs for quality education and training materials. A review team consisting of representative of CORD, NCATC, and the Iacocca Institute chose five colleges to make up the Curriculum Team from 21 institutions that responded to a request for proposals.

The final curriculum team included representatives from Sussex Community College, New Jersey; Grand Rapids Community College, Michigan; Salt Lake Community College, Utah; Northern Essex Community College, Massachusetts; and St. Clair College of Applied Arts and Technology, Ontario, Canada. Each school committed to assign staff to the project who were willing to work collaboratively using a new curriculum design as well as new technology. The final curriculum team included teaching faculty, instructional designers, administrators, and members of "shadow colleges." Academic disciplines represented on the team included business, theology, engineering, and communications. This team's challenge was to outline an entire curriculum for manufacturing associates (entry-level employees), based on five Integrated Curriculum Standards (ICS) developed by CORD, and to collaboratively develop at least four prototype models. The collaborative process would be carried out primarily with the use of technology, including desk-top videoconferencing and document sharing software. These tools would be supplemented with periodic face-to-face meetings, as well as telephone conference calling and e-mail.

A week-long orientation meeting was held at the CORD offices in Waco, Texas, in August 1996 to introduce the Curriculum Team members to each other and to the process. Activities included team building activities, as well as training on concepts including contextual learning and project-based learning. CORD staff described the ICS design and embedded assessment methodology employing rubrics. The curriculum content was to be based on five skill areas identified by Lucent Technologies as top priorities (business knowledge, technical skills, teamwork, quality process technology, and computer skills), and five ICSs as developed by CORD (Personal, Interpersonal, Systems, Procedures, and Information). Curriculum Team members also had an opportunity to "test-drive" the software that would be used for videoconferencing and document-sharing. By week's end, the team members had been inundated with information, but were still unclear regarding their own roles and authority for both altering and contributing to the final curriculum design. Issues of roles, conflict management, communication styles, and power remained a part of the Curriculum Team's agenda until its final meeting in 1997.

When team members returned home, they faced the technological challenges of installation of the new software. Members were optimistic about the potential for timely communications and document editing, but the reality was often disappointing. Of numerous attempts to use the videoconferencing technology, only one was successful; this attempt required one of the team members to travel 65 miles to another, larger school to connect. The document-sharing feature was never successfully implemented. The Curriculum Team used "lower-tech" methods including telephone, e-mail, overnight mail, and fax, supplemented by several face-to-face meetings at member school locations. While the technology proved frustrating, the team outlined a curriculum of eighteen modules that addressed all project standards. Four prototype modules were chosen for development: Hard Choices: Applying Values and Ethics in the Workplace, Measuring Your Processes, Teams at Work, and Quality and Your Customer: a Systems Approach.

In addition to technological challenges, the Curriculum team faced other challenges to the process of collaboration. By design, the team was diverse in terms of background, work styles, and regional cultural differences. All team members had much experience in working alone to develop curriculum, and some were impatient with the laborious and often messy process of consensus-building that was required by the collaborative process. One team member left the project voluntarily, and others were re-assigned or added during the life of the project. A CORD staff member maintained the role of group facilitator throughout the project.

The time constraint was another challenge for the Curriculum Team. Since part of the project's purpose was to explore the ability of community colleges to respond quickly to industry needs, the six-month time frame for development was non-negotiable. For faculty used to course development and approval time measured in years, this time frame may have seemed unreasonable. For those "shadow college" members accustomed to quick turnaround, the speed was hindered by the slow process of consensus as carried out with low-tech methods. The team spent over half of the six months debating variations, with only about two months left for actual curriculum writing.

Collaborative writing and revision continued after the initial six-month deadline, and pilot testing and revisions are still occurring. CORD worked in collaboration with the original authors and, in some cases, with outside consultants and educators, to refine the four prototype modules and increase the level of workplace contextualization. Additional revisions were incorporated during train-the-trainer sessions for the pilot tests, and feedback from participants in the pilot tests has been incorporated in the final modules. Nearly four years after the start of the project, four modules are ready to be published and made available for use in college and worksite settings. Despite the time and effort required, members of the Manufacturing Workforce Collaborative Project agree that collaboration has created a stronger final product.

Even though the Manufacturing Workforce Collaborative Project was officially completed in January 1999, the collaborative effort goes on. To date, nearly 20 community colleges and 10 Lucent Technologies manufacturing plants have been involved in the Lucent Technologies Foundation Manufacturing Workforce Collaborative project since 1995. Products developed to date include four modules of the Necessary Skills Now curriculum, which have been pilot-tested by community college instructors in Lucent Technologies plants. In addition, St. Clair College of Applied Arts and Technology has also been awarded the contract for development of multi-media enhancement of the Hard Choices module.

In reflecting upon the Manufacturing Workforce Collaborative, it is tempting to invoke a few of Murphy's Laws: "Nothing is as easy as it appears." "Everything takes longer than you think it will." And, "everything that can go wrong will go wrong." Nevertheless, those involved in this project learned some important lessons about collaborating across time, space, job title, and discipline. This workshop will address questions asked and lessons learned in the following areas:

- ◇ **Communications.** What are the advantages and disadvantages of various modes of communication, including, When do the advantages of face-to-face meetings outweigh the costs? When does technology act as a tool for effective team communications? When is it a barrier?
- ◇ **Teamwork.** How do teams of historically independent professionals handle issues of authority and leadership? How are roles and responsibilities of team members defined and negotiated? How and when can technology support teamwork?
- ◇ **Decision-Making.** In what ways can teams of peers handle issues of power, process, and criteria in decision-making?
- ◇ **Collaborative Development.** Is collaboration worth the time it takes? How do we know? Are all team members equal, or are some more equal than others? How can we assess quality and return on investment in a collaborative educational product?

Issues related to collaborative curriculum development, industry skills standards, and the use of technology for collaboration are pertinent to all institutions seeking or renewing accreditation. Our discussion will include examples relevant to both faculty and administrators in both credit and non-credit settings, and the presentation will link lessons learned from the Manufacturing Workforce Collaborative to the self-study process, in an effort to make "connecting the disconnects" easier for the next collaborative group.

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Chapter 5

Connecting the Disconnects: Faculty Development/ Changing Roles of Faculty

CONNECTING THE DISCONNECTS

104th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
April 10-13, 1999 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

University Faculty Disconnected: Making Mentoring Connections

Gaye Luna
Deborah Cullen

Introduction

> *I can't seem to figure out how important my scholarship would be. The university speaks of its primary goal of teaching undergraduate students; but I have heard that if you don't have so many publications, you won't get tenured. There are so many secret, unwritten rules in academe that I find myself anxious about my future here.*
>
> – Assistant Professor at a Western Doctoral I University

> *I would like to improve my teaching and update my course content, and maybe use some multimedia resources, but I'm unsure how to start and where to begin. I'm embarrassed to ask since I'm one of the senior professors in the department and am supposed to be a role model in every way.*
>
> – Professor at a Midwestern Research I University

Academe is an interesting culture–sometimes it is undefined, sometimes it is confusing, and sometimes it is mysterious. Most faculty discover the culture in which they work the "old fashioned" way, learning the "in's" and "out's" through the grapevine and learning from experience. Faculty do not learn well the culture in their doctoral programs; in many ways it has to be lived. As Schoenfeld and Magnan (1992) point out, "Most newly appointed assistant professors have a general idea what being a professor is all about.... But since there's no West Point for professors, real training for the assignment comes from being in the assignment. So they learn from role models and making their own mistakes" (p. 1).

Some faculty are fortunate to have mentors within their professional lives. Mentorship within universities is useful and powerful in understanding and advancing organizational culture, providing access to informal and formal networks of communication, and offering personal and professional stimulation. University faculty often need assistance in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service. The assistance may be very specific–"How do I design an evaluation for ..." or "Which line of inquiry should I focus on in my research that would be beneficial to the discipline and my advancement toward tenure and promotion..." or "Would you sponsor me for membership in our discipline's professional association?"

Mentoring has been utilized successfully in the private sector as a tool, strategy, or technique for the development of employees. The concepts of private-sector mentoring can be translated to academic settings. The parameters and rules may need to change, but the guiding principle of mentoring–to assist in the development of an individual–remains the same. Academics have noted the inspiration and guidance of a good mentor as "a given...one of the nearly indispensable ingredients of a successful career" (*Chronicle*, 1992, p. A7).

Why Should Academe Be Concerned with Mentoring?

Faculty are human beings–they can become disinterested, disgruntled, and dismayed throughout their academic careers. Some faculty are recruited away by other universities. Some faculty are not attracted to employment offers because of a lack of support. Some faculty members' needs cannot be met while others are important and should be addressed. Mentoring has shown promise as an appropriate intervention for addressing a variety of faculty needs and concerns.

Faculty with mentors in a large study (Queralt, 1982) demonstrated greater productivity as leaders in professional associations, received more competitive grants, and published more books and articles than those faculty without mentors. These thriving faculty indicated greater career and job satisfaction and achieved more success than did their mentorless counterparts. A study of the nature of mentoring among faculty at a large public university analyzed a total of 29 activities denoting four primary types of mentoring functions (Sands, Parson, and Duane, 1991): (1) a *friend* allowed emotional support, social interactions, and advice with personal problems; (2) the *career guide* emphasized professional advancement; (3) the *information source* provided policies and procedures related to promotion, committee expectations, or other responsibilities; and (4) the *intellectual guide* promoted collaboration and constructive feedback.

On a different note, academe in the new millennium can expect an increasing number of women and minorities, as students and workers (National Commission, 1990). By the 21st century, the number of Hispanic women in the labor force will increase from 3.8 million to 5.8 million, African-American women will increase by 33 percent to more than 8 million, and one in 10 new female entrants will be Asian, American Indian, or Native Alaskan.

The academic community is expected to continue its commitment to increasing the number of minority faculty members, to more accurately reflect the demographics of society and the increasing enrollment of minority students in higher education. With the increases in student diversity, the report card on the percentages of full-time minority faculty, however, is discouraging:

Percentage of Full-time Minority Faculty

American Indian	Asian	African-American	Hispanic	White
0.3%	5%	5%	2%	88%

(*Chronicle*, 1994, p. A33)

In comparing the 1992-93 school year to 1993-94, 33% of higher education institutions experienced a net gain in minority faculty members, 62% had no net change, and 5% had a net loss (*Chronicle*, 1994, p. A44).

How Does Mentoring Empower a Disconnected Faculty?

Administrators, faculty colleagues, the academic community all know when a faculty member becomes disconnected? They may not know all the reasons, but they can minimally sense that a problem occurs. Mentoring is one tool that can be customized, institutionalized, and shared when working with the needs and concerns of faculty members.

Mentoring is best used for specific purposes and goals and with faculty who volunteer to participate, either as mentors or as protégés. Process, philosophy, expectations, and remuneration should be considered when incorporating mentoring into the educational institution's framework and structure. Mentoring must not be approached haphazardly, with mismatched pairs or with restrictive administrative control. Mentors must be qualified for the identified program or purposes and be willing to share their knowledge and power. Protégés must be open to feedback; constructive criticism; and changes to thinking, behavior, and attitudes. Progress and growth will occur from a commitment to the mentoring relationship.

Various research studies have determined ways in which mentoring empowers individuals and assists in connecting "disconnected" faculty. Barowsky (1988) suggests that mentoring is important for women for the following reasons:

- To serve the diverse needs of women
- To help women develop new skills
- To help women think creatively about their futures
- To teach women how to network
- To help women overcome hurdles to promotion
- To help women overcome psychological misconceptions
- To help women promote themselves and their careers

Mentoring programs and relationships for minority faculty should consider the following suggestions:

- Pair minority faculty who need to build their research and scholarship with senior scholars.
- Develop parameters for the relationship and include goals that address the nontraditional protégé's concerns.
- Do not assume that minority faculty know the "rules of the game."
- Exhibit cultural sensitivity and work to learn about the backgrounds of minority faculty.

Faculty often disconnect because they believe that faculty leadership is not sought or valued. By permitting faculty to participate creatively in projects, governance, and problem solving, a university will improve and succeed as all work toward the institution's mission. As faculty mentoring relationships grow from directive interactions to equivalents of collaboration, transmission of the profession legacy to posterity occurs through empowerment of faculty (Healy and Welchert, 1990). Advantages of mentoring faculty leaders are as follows:

- Enhances organizational culture (department, college, institution)
- Clarifies internal academic politics
- Allows for continuity about the institution and its people
- Promotes problem solving
- Provides for the maturation of personal judgment (e.g., how to judge people, control anger, or analyze issues)
- Cultivates contacts and networks with colleagues
- Heightens competence and productivity
- Fosters empowerment
- Advances career development and planning
- Creates social change
- Supports opportunities to improve diversity
- Favors optimal use of human potential and resources
- Attracts and retains good faculty
- Improves career and personal satisfaction
- Nourishes rejuvenation
- Encourages opportunities, options, and alternatives
- Promotes role identification
- Plans for succession
- Increases the number of ambassadors for the institution

Conclusion

If mentoring is to succeed as a strategy to connect "disconnected" faculty in universities, it must be supported by the faculty, administrators, presidents, and governing boards. Mentoring must be valued as a means to emphasize, support, and empower human resources.

Mentoring can be a tool or a philosophical framework used for a variety of faculty-related needs. Mentoring junior colleagues in teaching and scholarship and mentoring faculty for leadership roles are important agenda items for institutions. Moreover, the promotion of women and faculty of color in the professorate is critical. Mentoring enhances productivity, addresses collegiality, and could do more to recruit, retain, and advance faculty.

Mentoring is an excellent framework that can assist in transforming the academic environment (see, e.g., Luna and Cullen, 1995). Wright and Wright (1977, p. 207) clearly pointed out that the mentoring process can contribute significantly to the dynamic development of [the] profession . . . By not mentoring, we are wasting talent. We educate and train, but don't nurture. We should be concerned with capitalizing on the young professional's talent.

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Connecting the Faculty to Achieving the Learning College Mission: Addressing the "Disconnects" in the New Roles and Responsibilities

Mary Ann Bazile
Cindy Thiede

Introduction

Moraine Park Technical College is one of 16 technical college districts in Wisconsin and has campuses in Fond du Lac, Beaver Dam, and West Bend, Wisconsin. Our mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students, staff, and the larger community–building a competitive work force in an accessible and caring learning environment. Moraine Park Technical College offers a variety of educational and training opportunities, including more than 50 associate's degree and technical diploma programs. The college has a total headcount of more than 21,000 students and generates more than 2600 FTEs.

Principles that Guide our Culture

Moraine Park Technical College

- *Partnerships.* We work in partnership with each other and with the communities we serve.
- *Communication.* We practice open and frequent communication.
- *Success.* We make every effort to help learners achieve success.
- *Empowerment.* We make informed decisions at a level as close as possible to the customer.
- *Support environment.* We work together with respect, trust, and integrity to enhance risk-taking, encourage diversity of opinion, and eliminate fear.

Principles that Guide our Work

Moraine Park Technical College

- *Systems and process.* We believe in evaluating our systems and processes based on customer requirements to uncover gaps and work toward continuous improvement and customer satisfaction.
- *Learning.* As a teaching institution, we are committed to growth through learning for students and staff alike.
- *Quality and excellence.* Everything we do reflects a commitment to excellence.
- *Resource allocation.* We are dedicated to the effective and efficient use of our resources (time, space, and money).

The Learning College

The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) has been studying and learning about the learning college concept for the past couple of years. In 1998, WTCS colleagues had further discussions about the benefits of implementing the learning college concept. In December 1998 the presidents of all 16 Wisconsin Technical Colleges adopted guiding tenets of the learning college based on Terry O'Banion's *A Learning College for the 21st Century*. These guiding tenets follow:

Wisconsin Technical College System
Guiding Tenets of the Learning College

The learning college places learning first and provides educational experiences for learners anyway, anyplace, anytime.

- ○ The learning college creates substantive change in individual learners.
- ○ The learning college engages learners in the learning process as full partners, assuming primary responsibility for their own choices.
- ○ The learning college creates and offers as many options for learning as possible.
- ○ The learning college assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.
- ○ The learning college defines the roles of the learning facilitators by the needs of the learners.
- ○ The learning college and its learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for its learners.

In a learning college, we realize that there will be profound changes in the roles of faculty and their relationships with learners. The traditional role of the faculty member lecturing to students (sage on the stage) will become a thing of the past. Faculty will be placed in the role of learning facilitators, guiding the learning of their learners. They will be more involved in mentoring, using new technology to deliver essential information, and interacting with students in new and different ways such as via the Internet and e-mail. In essence, their roles will need to change in this new learner-centered environment.

Disconnects on the Way to the "Learning College"

☐ **First disconnect. College missions and visions are often developed by administrators and boards without leadership or input from faculty or support professionals.**

In order for any college to move from a "teaching environment" to the learning environment that engages learners as full "partners," its staff of managers, faculty, and support professionals also need to be treated as "full partners" and therefore "own" the mission/vision of the college. To own any concept or product means equal partnership in the creation of such concept or product as well as in crafting the process for its implementation.

Prior to the mid 1990's it could be said that the leadership of Moraine Park Technical College believed as did many colleges at that time, that the "results" of projects such as the crafting of a mission/vision statement should be "communicated" to the staff, but that the leadership and actual work of such a project needed to come from the "executive" branch of the college. In the early 1990s, the college initiated several projects to determine the direction the college should be taking to serve students. These projects did not include representation in leadership roles from all job classifications; it was simply "announced" that the projects existed. This resulted in initiatives such as "JOBS 2000" failing to garner participation and ultimately "ownership" in their implementation by many faculty, managers, and support professionals. JOBS 2000, as it was designed, therefore failed to reach its objective. Many people felt it "wasn't their project." In addition, because results of this project and others had not been formally communicated to the entire college after they were considered completed, many staff said, "enough! Don't even ask for our participation or input. You don't use it in the final product."

The first college-wide project after JOBS 2000 was the "redrafting" of the college's mission/vision statement. This time, however, based on the input of the college as to why the JOBS 2000 project failed, leadership for the remaking of the mission/vision statements included equal representation from management, faculty, and support professionals. Time was assigned to all people involved for the accomplishment of this work "during" working hours. This meant that substitutes were hired to cover teaching; teams planned how to cover the work of both managers and support professionals who were working on this initiative. The president participated but did not insist upon being "the leader." He took a much more passive role than he had in the past, giving the way to confidence building by individuals and the team. Mission/vision statements were drafted and sent to the entire college for feedback. The statements were finalized with changes based on college-wide feedback. Everyone in the college had an opportunity to give feedback to the proposed statements.

The team implemented a process wherein these final mission/vision statements were not only framed and hung in the "Board Room" as one would expect, but were shared with the college, the community, and with all students. The college moved a step closer to a "learning college" by treating faculty, managers, and support professionals as equal partners in the leadership and development of its mission/vision statements. Value was given to individuals working on this project through the reassignment of their regular duties and through the assignment of leadership roles. The entire college now shares in the "ownership" of these statements.

☐ **Second disconnect. "Walking the talk" of the college's mission/vision is not shared equally throughout the college.**

Although the college enjoyed shared leadership and therefore ownership of the statements that make up its mission/vision, the college soon found that it did not share in "walking the talk" of the mission/vision. The statements were on the wall, in brochures, and on business cards, yet the college was not on the "same page" as to how it would, for instance: "make a positive difference in the lives of students and in the community," one of the tenets of the college's mission/vision. The interpretation of "what" this actually looked like or didn't look like was only in each individual's mind and not a shared vision. The college soon experienced confusion, frustration, and even a contractual dispute regarding whether or not the college was "making a positive difference," in essence, "walking the talk" or holding to the tenets of its mission/vision statement.

Moraine Park moved to a formal team structure for its organization utilizing a layer or circle of cross-functional teams (representatives from all functions of the college) in addition to its work teams (set up by discipline). All teams develop goals and objectives that become the work of the college. Goals and objectives all need to identify in some manner with the mission/vision statement–an identity that is agreed upon by the entire team. These goals and objectives are not only published annually, but also the progress made in reaching each goal and objective is measured and published on a consistent basis. This process again offers opportunities for ownership. Teams find that the term "measurement of progress" carries with it the responsibility of "walking the talk" of the goal or objective and therefore ownership of its planned achievement. Walking the talk of the goal or objective eventually leads to walking the talk of the college mission/vision by induction–team style that is!

☐ **Third disconnect. In the learning college, faculty are responsible for "facilitating learning." Prior to the learning college, faculty were responsible for "teaching."**

This Learning College idea started showing up in educational publications. Barr and Tagg wrote about the Learning College in the Nov/Dec, 1995 publication of *Change*. Terry O'Banion gave us his interpretation of the Learning College in his article, "A Learning College for the 21st Century," in 1995 and authored a book of the same title in 1997. Seeing this "fundamental shift" presented in print and hearing about these concepts at many conferences, Moraine Park decided the college needed to move in the direction of the Learning College. It didn't, at least initially, follow the "partnership" process that worked so well for the crafting of the mission/vision statement for the move to the learning college–a disconnect. The questions popped up: "What is this Learning College thing?" "Who's doing the Learning College?" "Do I need to know about the Learning College?" To tie this to "another wrong direction red flag," it should be noted that these questions were only being asked by a minority rather than a majority of staff. Few were even aware that the college was serious about moving to a learning college. Once again, ownership was in question.

Assessment and the Learning College

Right on the heels of the literature on the learning college came assessment through performance. With the learning college officially "hanging in the air," the college made a strong, equal-partner move to develop a formal college-wide assessment plan. This turn, in one swoop, gave the college the basis for both a learning college and a solid assessment plan. The process designed to develop this assessment plan would also assure ownership by faculty, management, and support professionals.

A Project Team was established that was co-led by management and faculty individuals. The team was represented by faculty, management, and support professionals—weighted heaviest to faculty membership. The same process used for the mission/vision statement project was utilized with enhancements. For this project team, value in the form of official workload was assigned to one faculty member from each discipline to work as Student Academic Achievement Assessment Representative (SAAAPT Rep). This faculty representative worked on the team and then "mentored" his or her co-workers in completing the work of assessment.

As part of assessment, the concept of "teaching environment" vs. "learning environment" came under discussion. In order to now "measure" if our college was in fact improving and expanding upon the learning that takes place at MPTC, it was first imperative to define where the college was in its move toward adapting the tenets of the learning college. In some of the initial input collected about assessment from all classifications across the college, the team found that many individuals were holding tightly to the premise that learning takes place if course evaluations rate "positive" (a 3 or better on a 1-5 scale) on "most" questions. Individuals also felt that if students indicated they liked the instructor, the student must have learned. The fact that students passed the course was another indicator that learning had taken place. These beliefs obviously "fly in the face" of the learning college and are considered only "indirect" measures of learning in assessment. Yet these are sincere beliefs held by many of Moraine Park's instructors and instructors across this nation. It is a most natural behavior to "teach as we were taught" and using course evaluations to show that we were doing a good job and students were learning has been in place for many, many years.

SAAAPT quickly developed not only an Assessment Plan but also the process to implement this plan. This process included work teams (dean and faculty) identifying program outcomes and core ability indicators as expected performances of learners as a result of their work with the college. The work teams identified how each of these outcomes were assessed and the changes that needed to be made to these assessment activities so that "actual performance" of an outcome or indicator rather than a "show of knowledge" was the final work of the learner.

Turning the Corner to the Learning College

Moraine Park has used several keys in turning the corner from teaching environment to learning environment. The most important key was that it used what it learned in crafting its mission/vision statements—equal partnerships. When this partnership process was used again in developing the college assessment plan, ownership to the product and process was elevated to an all-time high. During the last Professional Development Days, six workshops related to assessment were offered to all staff. All workshops were planned and delivered by faculty, managers, and support professionals from the assessment team. All workshops enjoyed above-average attendance.

Equal partnership and ownership is ongoing in that not only are the SAAAPT Representatives assigned workload value to "mentor" the rest of the college during the implementation of the assessment plan, but all faculty are given workload value to move the assessment plan into its final implementation.

Using the concepts of equal leadership roles, participation, and feedback opportunities for all, walking the talk of team decisions, using cross-functional teams and work teams, and measuring outcomes Moraine Park Technical College has taken a giant leap towards implementing the tenets of the learning college.

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Engaging Faculty in Standards, Assessment, and Technology

Francis A. (Jerry) Griffith

Students entering higher education from P-12 standards-based schools will be very different from the students colleges and universities are used to receiving. P-12 SBE graduates will be increasingly accustomed to: (1) a range of assessments of learning in disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses with immediate and detailed feedback about their performance (often using written scoring guides, or rubrics); (2) explicit information about what they are expected to know and be able to do in specific courses and programs of study; (3) opportunities for active and cooperative/collaborative learning as team members on class projects where they were evaluated both individually and collectively; (4) pedagogy that uses a variety of sensory avenues (audible, visible, tactile/kinesthetic); (5) faculty who are responsive to differences in students' learning styles and who create environments that allow students to demonstrate best their knowledge and skill; and (6) faculty who use computers and other forms of technology effectively and creatively in academic courses.

The ultimate goal of P-16 standards-based education reform is to develop graduation standards and performance-based assessments for academic departments, for general education, and for licensure/certification programs in colleges and universities. An effective way to stimulate these changes is to gain the active support of faculty members who have learned the value of the standards-based philosophy and procedures for modifying academic courses according to a standards-based framework.

From 1995-98, the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) conducted the Educational Technology Improvement Project (ETIP) with funding from the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. The goals and objectives of the project were to: (1) improve the quality of teaching and learning at UNC by helping faculty members learn to integrate academic-content standards, performance-based assessments, and technology into their courses; (2) increase accessibility of learning opportunities by redesigning courses to take advantage of distance-education technologies; and (3) disseminate the results of the project locally and nationally. ETIP was a response to local and national calls to (1) set high, achievable standards for what students know and can do; (2) increase the use of performance-based assessments that duplicate or simulate the application of knowledge and skills in the real world; and (3) prepare students for success in the computer age, including online learning experiences in non-traditional settings and time frames.

During the second and third project years, 26 faculty members were selected (from each College and the Library) to redesign courses that had high enrollments and good potential for distance delivery using electronic technology. Twelve (12) faculty members were in the 1996-97 cohort and 14 in the 1997-98 cohort. Each faculty member was given .25 release time from regular duties (for the academic year) to redesign and deliver a course he/she teaches regularly. Faculty participants (FPs) had access to personal computers in the ETIP computer lab and each was provided a laptop computer for use during the project. They attended small-group meetings, whole-group meetings, and one-on-one meetings with project staff members (especially the project's educational-technology facilitators) to learn to: (1) develop standards for his/her course, i.e., statements of what students should know and be able to do at the end of the course; (2) develop performance-based assessments of student learning; i.e., tasks similar to those encountered in the real world, which require students to apply their knowledge and skills using high levels of critical thinking, problem-solving, written- and oral-communication skills, and teamwork; (3) develop scoring guides for assignments or projects that reflect varying degrees of accomplishment of course standards; and (4) select and use appropriate technologies to improve instruction and/or assessment of student learning and to increase access to learning opportunities.

Twenty-three of the FPs developed web pages for their redesigned courses; many of these pages are available on the ETIP web site: http://etip.unco.edu. The project staff also developed a detailed web guide, included on the web site under "About ETIP." This guide describes all of the steps used to conduct and evaluate the project. There is a web page for each step that describes the procedure, the rationale for it, examples from the project, and advice about lessons learned for each step.

By the end of the project, the FPs had redesigned 31 courses. Several of the FPs offered their redesigned courses at a distance and two were involved in the distance delivery of entire graduate programs. FPs were taught how to: maintain course web sites by uploading and downloading files to the web server; create graphics and scan images; access the internet and make more effective use of Netscape; use various forms of software to create web sites; and use Windows 95, e-mail, online conferencing from home, and online surveys and tests. Technology applications shown on course web sites include: online conferencing, listservs, web sites, online tutorials, online surveys and tests, Power Point presentations, compressed video, and CD-ROMs.

The project enhanced markedly the quality and nature of the educational experience. Active learning was fostered via changes in pedagogy and the use of technology. For example, most redesigned courses involve considerably more interaction among students and the instructor than in the past, via listservs and online conferencing. Approximately 80% of students reported that they knew they were accountable to standards for the course and that the standards were fair and achievable. They knew that scoring guides were being used to assess the quality of their performance on certain tasks and 68% reported that scoring guides were clear and helped them improve their performance. Seventy-three per cent (73%) of the students agreed that the use of web sites, demonstrations, and other use of technology enhanced the depth and range of their learning and that course projects, tutorials, labs, assignments, and tests helped them learn more effectively.

Faculty reported feeling renewed and re-energized because of having a new way to conceptualize their courses and their roles as instructors. They reported a high degree of satisfaction with the standards-based model, their increased knowledge of and ability to use technology, and overall project activities. Many FPs indicated a strong desire to continue to receive technical support and to have access to advanced instruction in standards-based education and technology. According to the project evaluator,

> *Approximately one-half of the ETIP faculty members indicated that the SBE [standards-based education] handouts and discussions helped them to be more conscious of instructional design, and the need to focus on specific learning objectives. ETIP faculty also reported that the SBE training made them more cognizant of how to evaluate student learning, and made them more focused on student outcomes. ETIP raised faculty awareness of the use of technology in the classroom. The release time provided by the project was critical to faculty and allowed needed time for redesigning courses to include both SBE and technology. Faculty members described the project as a valuable experience. One faculty member reported, "Being part of ETIP was the highlight of my tenure (at UNC). It was like a fringe benefit. I consider myself lucky to be part of this project. I just loved it. I plan to use what I've learned and to mentor others in using technology and standards."*

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Chapter 6

NCA

Institutional Integrity

CONNECTING
THE DISCONNECTS

104th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
April 10-13, 1999 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

Unlayering the Onion: Value Beneath the Surface

Suzanne Selig

In September 1997, approximately two years prior to the University of Michigan-Flint NCA self-study due date, a group of fifteen administrators and faculty was brought together to develop an approach to write the self-study chapter on Criterion Five. Participants were selected on the basis of their respective areas of responsibility to ensure that the group was knowledgeable about the broadest range of university policies and procedures with some members representing more than one area. The initial membership evolved over the year as a result of several staff reassignments and the later identification of some gaps in representation, e.g., the Public Television Station. The areas represented are shown in Table One:

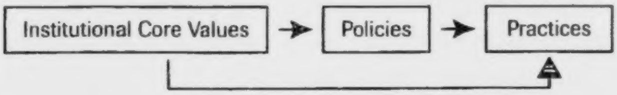
Table One
University Areas Represented

- Associate Provost for Academic Affairs
- Business Operations
- College of Arts and Sciences
- Educational Opportunities Initiatives/ Affirmative Action
- Environment, Health and Safety
- Extension and Continuing Education
- Facilities Management
- Faculty Council
- Frances Willson Thompson Library
- Honors Program
- Human Resources
- Human Subjects Committee
- Information Technology Services
- Office of Development
- Office of Graduate Programs and Research
- Office of Student Life
- Office of Alumni and University Relations
- Public Safety Department
- Project for Urban and Regional Affairs
- Recreational Services
- School of Health Professions and Studies
- School of Management
- Staff Council
- Student Government
- UM-Flint Code and Nominating Committee
- Unit Academic Standards Committees
- University Outreach
- Vice Chancellor for Student Services and Enrollment Management
- WFUM-TV 28

Defining Institutional Integrity

The first question that the workgroup addressed was: What does UM-Flint mean by "integrity"? The group agreed that "Institutional Integrity" is demonstrated (1) if the University's written policies and other patterns of evidence reflect its core institutional values; and (2) if practices are consistent with these policies and procedures and UM-Flint's core values and policies as shown:

Institutional Integrity



Inventory of UM-Flint's Policies and Procedures

The workgroup's first activity was to compile a complete inventory of UM-Flint policies and written procedures. Most of these policies had at least one workgroup member with responsibility for their oversight. Copies of these policies were placed in our NCA Resource Room. We then broadened our definition of institutional integrity to include consistency with "practice." This step required that we develop a mechanism to assess the relationship between policy and practice. To address this, the workgroup members were assigned to pairs, consisting of one person from within the unit and one outside the unit to facilitate more in-depth discussion of the policies across units. These subgroups were asked to examine these policies and procedures and grade them as follows:

"A" Policy is consistent with practice, no need to change
"B" Policy has been revised, is now consistent with practice
"C" Policy still requires change, and the plan for revision of the policy is...

During the small group process, the subgroups identified another category "D" wherein a common practice was either being, or needed to be, codified into a written procedure.

This additional activity demonstrated the dynamic relationship between policies and practices. It was evident that our written policies need to be monitored to ensure their accurate reflection of changes in practices. This activity also had some unanticipated benefits. Workgroup members reported to the larger group that they had gained a heightened respect and understanding of the magnitude of responsibilities shouldered by their colleagues across the university. Examples of policies that were graded as A, B or C are shown here:

Table Two
Examples of Policies with A, B, or C*

Area	Policy	Grade
College of Arts and Sciences	☐ Policies of Academic Standards Committee	A
University and Alumni Relations	☐ Ethical Code of the American Marketing Association	A
Department of Public Safety	☐ Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Handbook	A
Student Services and Enrollment Management	☐ Students Rights Policy ☐ Admissions Policies	B
School of Health Professions and Studies	☐ Appeal Policy for Instructional Staff	C

**C requires plan for addressing deficiency*

Defining UM-Flint Core Values

Another major task was to define UM-Flint's "Core Institutional Values." No previous effort had been undertaken to develop an explicit set of "core values" for UM-Flint. Therefore, many workgroup meetings were devoted to a discussion of our core values. Previous efforts based at the unit level, such as Human Resources, were offered as a model, but failed to achieve the endorsement of this broadly constituted group. A subgroup was formed to draft a preliminary set of core values. This draft provided a starting point, but was still unable to achieve consensus. Another subgroup turned to the products of the 1995 Academic Planning Committee which had been created to "refine the University's Mission Statement and address seven planning clusters: academic quality, collaboration, academic programs, minority attainment, community outreach, technology, and student support."

The efforts of the Academic Planning Committee had involved extensive data gathering related to the clusters and included numerous campus open-meetings with students, staff, faculty, administrators, community leaders, alumni, several Regents of the University of Michigan, and the University of Michigan President. Input as to UM-Flint's strengths and unique characteristics had been obtained. This process occurred over a 12-month period using focus groups, survey instruments, and individual interviews. The revised UM-Flint Mission Statement and 1995 Academic Plan are the products of this extensive effort. An analysis of these documents revealed that our core values were actually implicitly grounded in these products. We were able to utilize this previous effort (which had obtained university-wide endorsement) along with our own work to develop a set of 10 Core Values:

Table Three
Core Institutional Values

- Honesty and Integrity
- Equitable Treatment and Access
- Student-Centered Focus
- Academic Excellence
- Responsive Campus Climate
- Academic Freedom
- Responsible Decision-Making
- Responsiveness and Outreach to the Community
- Respect for Human and Cultural Diversity
- Citizenship and Service

We then refocused our examination of policies in the context of core values, e.g., "Do our institutional policies reflect our core values?" And, subsequently, "Do our practices (and programs) reflect both core values and policies?" To address these questions, the inventory of written policies and practices was further categorized by the underlying core value of the policies. Recognizing the need to limit the group's written product, we looked at the inventory of policies (a document of more than 40 pages), and selected those with the broadest impact on our students, and our other constituent groups (faculty, staff, community). For this subset of policies, the group uncovered another layer of "evidence" of institutional integrity, i.e., "What data exist to indicate that our policies are perceived as effective by UM-Flint's constituent groups?" To seek answers to this question, various sources of institutional data were examined. Some of these data sources were institutional surveys conducted at regular intervals, while others were initiated specifically to gather data for the NCA self-study.

Table Four
Selected List of Institutional Data Sources

- Student Satisfaction Inventory
- Graduation Surveys
- Freshman Surveys
- Alumni Surveys
- Opinion Surveys for Self-Study

Criterion Five workgroup members were assigned to mixed pairs (an academic area and a non-academic area, e.g., University Outreach and the College of Arts and Sciences) and requested to provide a brief description of the policies within their respective areas of responsibility, discuss how they reflect core values, and identify data sources that might relate to these policies and practices (Workgroup 5 Assignments, Table Five).

Table Five
Workgroup 5 Assignments

1. Review the attached list of policies for each of the 10 core values.
2. Highlight those policies that are in your area of responsibility.
3. Contact your "partner" and work together to:
    a. develop a descriptive statement of identified policies
    b. review the grading of these policies (A, B, or C)
    c. locate data that support the grading of these policies
4. Locating relevant data: Many sources of institutional data are housed in the Resource Room of the library (room 312).

A list of selected policies and practices by core value and selected data item(s) related to these is presented in Table Six. The next step for this workgroup will be to analyze the multiple sources of institutional data to further help UM-Flint focus its efforts in assuring that policies and practices reflect our core values, and that our "patterns of evidence" are meeting the needs of our various and diverse constituents.

Lessons Learned

Although this presentation precedes the completion of our self-study document, we believe that several lessons have been learned so far that might be useful for other institutions.

1. Start early in addressing this criterion. An early start allows for false starts and permits time for valuable debate about institutional identity.
2. Create a broadly constituted workgroup so that this process can facilitate greater familiarity and understanding across areas.
3. Consider using subgroups to address focused tasks. Promote "cross-fertilization" by creating heterogeneous subgroups.
4. Use this process to assess the perceptions of colleagues about policies that are unfamiliar to them.
5. Look for existing data in all available sources. It might be the case that there has been more work done than is initially apparent. And, sometimes valuable data can be found "beneath the surface."

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Appendix

Table Six

UM-Flint: Selected Core Values, Policies, and Related Data Items*

Core Value	Policies (Patterns of Evidence)	Selected Data Items from Self-Study Opinion Survey Gap Analysis
Equitable Treatment and Access	• UM-Flint Undergraduate Admissions Policy • UM-Flint Accessibility Services Handbook • Academic Unit Student Grievance Policies • Purchasing Services and Partners in Procurement • Fee Appeals and Fee Committee • Recreation Center's Behavior Policy • EOE?	• Clearly stated procedures for annual evaluation of my performance • Clearly stated personnel policies • Unbiased personnel policies • Clearly stated student disciplinary procedures • Clearly stated faculty grievance procedures • Clearly stated faculty disciplinary procedures • Employment opportunities for disabled individuals
Student-Centered Focus	• Policies on Student Services and Enrollment Management • Policy on Student Printing • Office of Development policy to increase privately funded scholarships	• Accessible student computer labs • Knowledgeable Academic Advising Center staff • Knowledgeable Admissions staff • Knowledgeable Financial Aid staff • Knowledgeable Registration staff • Reasonable registration policies (e.g., add/drop)
Academic Excellence	• Academic Units Academic Standards (Review) Committees • Graduate Program Approval Process • Academic Unit Promotion and Tenure Policies • Graduate Program Review	• Clearly stated policies and procedures for promotion and tenure • Unbiased policies and procedures for promotion and tenure • Clearly stated student academic standards procedures • Adequate technical support for faculty research • Adequate administrative support for faculty research
Responsive Campus Climate	• UM-Flint Emergency Response Plan • Public Safety Campus Security Handbook • EOE?	• Respectful UM-Flint faculty • Good student/faculty relationships • Good student/staff relationships • Good student/administration relationship • Freedom from Sexual Harassment on campus • Welcoming campus atmosphere
Responsible Decision-Making	• UM-Flint Faculty Code • Faculty Codes of Individual Academic Units	• Clear communication by Chancellor/Vice-Chancellors concerning objectives and policies • UM-Flint's relationship with UM-Ann Arbor • Opportunities for faculty input in administrative decision-making • Appropriate structure for faculty governance committees • Effective UM-Flint faculty code

*Additional items available from other Institutional Data

Cultural Diversity Through Faculty Exchange, Minority Recruitment and Retention

Gwen Koehler
Ron Holohan
Yvonne Singley

Fifty years ago the Truman Commission set the stage for postsecondary education to embrace egalitarianism and student diversity. In its introduction, the writers of this guiding document stated that "...the social role of education in a democracy is at once to insure equal liberty and equal opportunity to differing individuals and groups and to enable the citizens to understand, appraise, and redirect forces and events." Public policy emerged to establish the framework for providing higher education opportunities to all segments of society. Today, as the nation's demographics are dramatically changing, education leaders are confronted with additional challenges in fulfilling this mission. Today's student body includes a more racially and ethnically diverse population than ever before. The issue of diversity on our campuses challenges traditional education. Frederick Fresh, past president of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, writes concerning diversity: "There are no easy answers.... The challenge to higher education, given the present environment is going to force us to become innovative." One of the unique challenges of the increasing diversity among our students is the noticeably slower growth of diversity among faculty members. Fewer programs for addressing faculty diversity exist at this point in time than for addressing student diversity. This paper describes an initiative among Illinois community colleges to address composition of its faculty.

The Problem

The Truman Commission Report affirmed two major principles: equal opportunity and higher education for all, including minorities. How well has higher education done in this regard over the last fifty years? According to the "Fifteenth Annual Status Report on Minorities in Higher Education" prepared by the American Council on Education, minority student enrollments continue to rise. The total number of minority students rose 2.9% in 1995 (the last year for which data were available). Minority students accounted for a quarter of all students that year. Graduation rates were less encouraging, however. In 1994 black students made up 10.7% of the undergraduate population at four-year institutions but earned only 7.2% of the undergraduate degrees. Hispanic students earned only 4.3% of the bachelor's degrees although they made up 7.9% of the population.

Community colleges in Illinois, like most states, are key players in the education of minorities. In Illinois fifty percent of the minority population enrolled in higher education is enrolled in the community college system. In 1998 community college minority enrollments were 33.2% of the entire student body. While these figures are greater than the percent of minorities throughout the state (25.4% minorities in Illinois and expected to increase by 79.3% by the year 2025), further examination provides us with a clearer picture. The most recent data show that college level enrollments for Asians, Native Americans, and Hispanics exceed their representation in the state. Enrollments for African-Americans, however, are below their representation in the state population. In addition, minorities accounted for the majority of pre-collegiate level enrollments in adult basic education and adult secondary education. Minority completions at the college level are generally equal to their enrollments with the exception of Hispanics.

In addition to the concern about enrollment and graduation rates, the issue of minority representation among faculty and staff cannot be overlooked. Persons of color account for only eighteen percent of all employees in Illinois community colleges. The two largest categories of employment for minorities in community colleges are clerical and "others." The representation of minority faculty and chief administrators in community colleges is still at rates below their representation in the state population.

Colleges are called to address the problem of minority under-representation among both students and faculty. Colleges are also called to respond to legislation and accreditation policies that are designed to address these issues. Public Act 85-283 requires community colleges to develop plans and implement strategies to increase the participation and advancement of minorities, women in nontraditional areas, and physically challenged individuals. Subsequent legislation requires that colleges report annually on the progress they have made in helping underrepresented groups. The North Central Association expects its affiliated institutions to practice equity of treatment of individuals and support the building of a diverse educational community. It also expects colleges and universities to create and maintain a teaching and learning environment that supports sensitivity to diverse individuals and groups.

The Resources

The responses among the 49 Illinois community colleges are as varied as the colleges themselves. Each of the 48 community colleges in Illinois has responded to these calls in differing ways. Many noteworthy efforts are taking place on individual campuses. These efforts range from brown bag dialogues to large scale recruitment activities.

In addition to the activities on the individual Illinois community college campuses, the state has several well established initiatives in higher education to address diversity. The Illinois Minority Graduate Incentive Program (IMGIP), funded through the Higher Education Cooperation Act (HECA funds) through the Illinois Board of Higher Education and The Illinois Consortium for Educational Opportunity Program (ICEOP) are two scholarship opportunities for minority graduate students. The purpose of these programs is to increase the number of underrepresented faculty and professional staff at institutions of higher education in Illinois. IMGIP provides fellowships to support students from underrepresented groups who are pursuing doctoral degrees in life science, physical sciences, engineering, and mathematics. ICEOP provides fellowships to underrepresented students who are pursuing master's, doctoral, and first-professional degrees in open fields of study at participating institutions in Illinois.

Several multicultural initiatives are in place with the support of the Illinois Board of Higher Education. The Multicultural Resource Development and Advising Center is a cooperative effort among five institutions: Eastern Illinois University, Illinois State University, Illinois Valley Community College, McHenry County College, and Western Illinois University. The center provides information to administrators, faculty, and staff of two- and four-year colleges on pedagogy, curriculum, and supportive structures for diversity. The center can provide multicultural specialists and resources on diversity issues. Parkland College's Center for Multicultural Education also provides resources for educational institutions throughout the state.

Bringing It All Together

Two years ago five Illinois community college presidents joined forces to tackle the issue of diversity among faculty ranks. Don Crist of Carl Sandburg College, Zerrie Campbell of City Colleges of Chicago, Mike Murphy of College of DuPage, Thomas Thomas of Illinois Central College, and Zelema Harris of Parkland College recognized that within the community college system in Illinois there is a richness of diversity and resources. Each college has a unique culture shaped by its community. City Colleges of Chicago, for example, is made up of seven colleges located a short distance from one another in the heart of the city. At the other end of the spectrum are colleges such as Carl Sandburg College, which serves a sparsely populated 3000 square mile district. These diverse institutions have strategies to share based on their demographic and geographic perspectives. Each of these institutions shares higher education's mission of preparing students for participation in a diverse workplace and for civic life in a diverse democracy. Rural college presidents whose colleges tend to serve a less diverse population are no less committed to these principles, but are clearly challenged in their efforts.

Don Crist called a meeting of faculty members within these institutions to broach the issue. The result of this meeting was the formation of a subcommittee that met for several months to put together a plan for sharing faculty resources. A grant was submitted to address, in a cooperative manner, the issue of faculty diversity. In September of 1998, the Faculty Exchange, Minority Recruitment and Retention Project was funded by HECA through the Minority Articulation Program. The goals of the project are as follows:

- to share the many different cultural environments and resources of our diverse community college system in Illinois through a faculty exchange program;
- to share strategies and theories for supporting access, equity, and cultural diversity within the Illinois community college system;
- to recruit and retain minority faculties at Illinois community colleges by providing them with first-hand professional experiences and by acquainting hiring committees and administrators with the quality and expertise that such faculties bring to campuses;
- to improve the transition of new faculties through a mentor program into Illinois community colleges and their communities;
- to foster an inclusive, multicultural climate at Illinois community colleges.

To accomplish these goals, the project has two components: (1) a Visiting Scholar program for exchange of faculty expertise and (2) an internship/residency program for recruitment and retention of minority faculty.

Visiting Scholar Program

The purpose of the exchange program is to share knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity on issues related to multicultural education, intercultural communication, and understanding. Interested faculty at one of several colleges can apply to participate for a two- to four-week exchange with another participating college. Faculty submit a plan that outlines activities in which the visiting scholar serves as a resource person for the host college. Some visiting scholars may bring to the host campus expertise and knowledge on issues, concerns, theories, strategies related to multicultural education. Other visiting scholars may have expertise in telecommunications and computer technology to share in a multicultural environment. A visiting scholar can be from any discipline as long as the multicultural emphasis is part of his or her plan. Typical activities include guest lecturing, attendance at committee meetings, visits with key faculties and administrators, peer partnering, consulting on projects, presentation of workshops. Prior to the exchange both host colleges and visiting scholars participate in an orientation provided by Parkland College's Center for Multicultural Education. This orientation focuses on creating an inclusive environment and intercultural communication. Following the exchange, the Visiting Scholar initiates forums, discussions, or other activities based on what was learned from the experience. It is expected that the perspective gained from the experience will enhance future participation in home college functions and committees.

Recruitment and Retention of Minority Faculty

The project works closely with current networks designed to encourage minority graduates to seek employment in higher education. Master's and doctoral level graduate students who are in their last year of studies may apply for an internship at participating colleges. Internship activities include part-time teaching, workshops for students, faculty and staff, and participation on committees. Minorities participating in the IMGIP and ICEOP program will have the opportunity to develop interest and expertise in the community college system. Upon completion of the internship, the student may apply for a one and half year residency at the college.

To comply with tenure policies, the semester internship is counted toward the residency. A student who has not completed an internship may apply for a two-year residency. The two-year residency consists of a reduced load for the first semester, gradually increasing each semester to a full load of teaching and committee responsibilities. During this period, the resident continues to provide workshops for students, faculty, and staff that contribute toward making the institution culture more inclusive. Mentorship is an important part of the experiences.

The intent of this program is to place up to ten interns per year for a four-year period. Illinois is experiencing a significant number of faculty retirements at this time. It is possible that forty minority graduate students will be introduced and placed within the community college system to affect the make up of the faculty in Illinois.

This project offers a means for faculty renewal and development and creates a mechanism for effective recruitment and retention of minorities in faculty positions. One of the few studies that examine the role of diversity on the learning experience of students is the 1991 "Diversity Project" completed by Berkeley's Institute for the Study of Social Change. This project frames diversity as "an experience in which people come together across different cultural experiences, and in that coming together produce an experience that is transcendent, greater than the sum of the individual parts...people come to see one another as resources, recognizing different and complementary competencies." (Institute for the Study of Social Change 1991, p.53) The presidents of the Illinois community colleges have garnered these resources and have joined forces to create momentum in the area of cultural diversity.

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Connecting the Disconnected: Online Learning Partnerships Enabling Milwaukee Area Technical College to Serve "Disconnected" Adults

Mary K. Sorensen

The "Disconnected"

The dropout rate in Wisconsin increased during the 1996-1997 school year, a fact directly attributable to the number of dropouts in the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). These statistics were reported in a media announcement, December 18, 1997, from the State Superintendent of Schools, John T. Benson. According to Benson, the statewide dropout rate increased from 2.448 percent in 1995-1996 to 2.675 percent in 1996-1997. *Milwaukee's dropout rate alone increased from 9.92 percent in 1995-1996 to an alarming 13.46 percent for 1996-1997.* Milwaukee Public Schools serve approximately 103,000 students in K-12. Therefore, approximately *13,853 students dropped out of MPS last year.* (Nationwide there are 44 million Americans without a high school diploma). These staggering numbers reflect a variety of changes occurring in Milwaukee. Despite high employment, 70% of Wisconsin's poor reside in Milwaukee. Many of the higher wage jobs are moving to the suburbs, taking with them a higher skilled labor force. This has contributed significantly to the expanding gap between the "Haves" and "Have Nots" in the community, and the pervasive cycle of poverty that exists within its inner city families.

Although there are no statistics as yet to verify its impact on dropout rates, Wisconsin began implementing its Welfare to Work (W-2) program during the 1996-1997 academic year. The plan was fully implemented on September 1, 1997. Education has been one of the unresolved needs of the program. There is speculation among the Milwaukee agencies administering W-2 that children are being forced to leave school to care for siblings when mothers are moved into the workforce. Unfortunately, this sweeping legislation has nearly eliminated provisions for educational assistance. Mothers who could have completed their high school education or technical training and moved into higher paying jobs are subsisting on lower paying employment—between $5 and $8/hour, which is not enough even to cover child care.

"Connecting the Disconnected"

The Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) Adult High School online diploma program was developed as a means of addressing Milwaukee and Wisconsin's dropout problem. Students unable to complete their high school diplomas in a traditional manner will be able to use

- ○ MATC computers in community based organizations and neighborhood high schools,
- ○ MATC Academic Support Centers,
- ○ MATC Online Learning Center,
- ○ as well as in their homes.

to complete their education through the online Adult High School courses, GED Workshops, and HSED credit courses. Dropouts and W-2 parents can build their reading and writing skills and improve their employment prospects while getting their high school diplomas online. MATC's partnership with Community Based Organizations and area high schools throughout the greater Milwaukee area enhances delivery by providing easy access and recruitment capabilities.

The appeal of the online courses has expanded the profile of prospective users and has opened several other new markets that were not anticipated with the original instructional design. In addition to serving adult high school drop-outs and non-completers, the Online High School Diploma Program is attracting:

- at-risk high school students (who are still in school) with only one or two credits to graduate;
- individuals with high school diplomas who still need math, science, or other credits to enter a postsecondary education program;
- people with disabilities who are confined to their homes;
- older adults who are intimidated by the prospect of returning to school;
- and rural dwellers who cannot travel to Milwaukee to attend the Adult High School.

While the school recruits in Wisconsin, it attracts students from other parts of the country as well and has even had occasion to assist several foreign students in meeting graduation requirements. Because each course is affordable—only $15.77 to $21.27 per credit—MATC has been able once again to *"connect many students who have become disconnected from education."*

Instruction takes place over the Internet using a curriculum specifically designed for students who are motivated to work independently toward high school graduation. Using various media (online web pages, interactive computer conferencing, as well as conventional reading materials), students receive instruction, ask questions of the instructor and of each other, discuss issues, and actively participate in the class. In the last two years, in an effort to provide *equal access*, MATC invested $100,000 in the Online Learning Center and $200,000 in the *Cornerstone Project* to equip 10 community based organizations in Milwaukee with computer labs to make online instruction readily available to the economically disadvantaged. Individuals and families who could not afford computers could go to any of the centers mentioned above to access computers and to receive training on use of these computers.

The Milwaukee Area Technical College's Adult High School is the only adult high school in the state of Wisconsin accredited by the NCA (North Central Association) Commission on Schools and able to confer a high school diploma. It has been accredited since 1923. During the past year, Milwaukee Area Technical College has expanded its Adult High School delivery to include 24 online high school credit courses, two GED Workshops, and all of the components to earn the High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED). The curricula are specifically designed for adults who are looking for a self-paced, flexible system for completing their high school education. The courses are proving highly successful in helping individuals who cannot attend or who do not succeed in a traditional classroom to earn their high school diplomas.

The Milwaukee Area Technical College Adult High School Online Diploma Program strives to empower students to develop essential learning skills and to achieve both personal and career goals. For those failed by the traditional system, it provides an alternative learning environment that strives to rebuild self-esteem through the use of various learning strategies and materials designed to meet the *needs of each student* effectively. The goal is not to compete with traditional institutions of learning but to complement the traditional education system by providing necessary solutions for younger at-risk students, gifted and talented students, and adult learners. It aims to support lifelong learning by creating a system of opportunities for these learners and their children to access the myriad resources of the Internet and web as they rebuild skills eroded by disinterest and intellectual inactivity

In addition to the online high school and GED courses, the MATC Adult High School introduced *Parents and Children, Partners Online*, a developmental reading program. This program is designed to help the adult learner recall and develop, through practice, the basic reading skills and other skills necessary to function as an independent, strategic reader. It stresses processing skills, comprehension skills, memory strategies, and the strategies required by each content area (science, math, English, and social studies) to make learning in the content area meaningful, integrated, and transferable. The required reading focuses on "Helping Your Children Read" and functions not only as the practice material, but also provides the adult reader with many good skills and ideas to help his/her children become better readers. The ultimate goal is to break the cycle of illiteracy in families.

Online Learning Partnership Development

In developing these online learning partnerships, the Milwaukee Area Technical College:

- examined and attempted to understand the needs of *all students* (male, female, minorities, students with disabilities, low achieving students, gifted and talented students, drop outs, at-risk students, and disadvantaged adults);
- defined stakeholders responsibilities;
- identified resources already available;
- explored options for the use and sharing of technology in schools, at home, in the community, in the workplace, in the inner city, in the suburbs, and in the rural areas;
- designed a distance education program that would link these people and resources (no matter where they were) as well as add in new resources;
- placed high value on ensuring that *all students* are academically prepared for the future of the 21st century;
- set as their goal the building of a network of "Learning Partnerships" to *leverage and link educational resources to all students everywhere;*
- tried to make learning *accessible to all.*

Implications for Research

Although their work represents an initial effort to further education for all, it has fostered many questions regarding how education for all will be possible and what will bridge the gap between the reality of where we are at present and where we hope to go: *education for all.*

- How do we integrate technology (modify curriculum) to enhance our educational objective, *education for all?*
- How do we develop better means of *assessing the impact of networking, online communication, and other new media in the classroom?* What part will centrality of clear goals and outcome statements and performance assessments play in this matter?
- How do we *ensure that our adult instructional programs provide for active participation of learners* and build on their prior knowledge, drawing on a lifetime of experiences as natural resources for learning?
- How do we *ensure that all schools and all students,* not just the privileged few, have access to the information super highway and online instruction?

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Chapter 7

NCA

General Education

CONNECTING THE DISCONNECTS

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A Conceptual Framework for General Education

James S. Kelly

Although there is no simple recipe for constructing or evaluating a general education program, the task of doing either can more easily be accomplished if one begins with a framework in which the aims of general education are clearly delineated. There may, of course, be competing thoughts on the aims of such a program. Nonetheless, there is a supporting tradition for the framework proposed as well as compelling contemporary arguments for its necessity. So what follows can be taken as a starting point for future discussions. At the very least, serious reflection on the aims of general education will help those involved in its construction or evaluation to identify the basics of a coherent program with clearly defined goals. As will become clear, a connection needs to be forged or identified between the dual aims of critical self-reflection and critical inquiry of received knowledge claims.

Image

Education, by the very meaning of the word, is concerned with drawing out, eliciting, evolving, and developing latent powers. Intelligently pursued and promoted, education must be guided by an **image** of the evolved or developed product. Too often the role of general education is conceived as one of providing a set of basic requirements geared to specialties that prepare people for pursuing particular ends. What is slighted by such a focus are the basic requirements for living a life worthy of us as human beings and as citizens.

In the *Handbook of Accreditation*, general education is defined thus:

> *General education is "general" in several clearly identifiable ways: it is not directly related to a student's formal technical, vocational, or professional preparation; it is part of every student's course of study, regardless of his or her area of emphasis, and it is intended to impart common knowledge, intellectual concepts, and attitudes that every educated person should possess* (NCA 1997).

But the phrase, "that every educated person should possess," leaves unexplicated just what constitutes an educated person and thus what the **image** of the finished product is that guides our educational efforts. In a liberally educated person, argues John Henry Cardinal Newman, "[a] habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom..." (Newman 1952). Newman also argues that a main function of general (liberal) education is to transmit the great outlines of knowledge, and the principles on which they rest. Since these aims come out of the middle of the nineteenth century, the basic idea that a liberal or general education involves a knowledge-broadening and character-building function needs re-expression and refinement. A clue to follow in doing this can be found in the NCA examples of evidence of appropriate goal concerns of general education: "courses that 'stimulate the examination and understanding of personal, social, and civic values" (NCA 1997).

As educators, our main concern must remain focused not only on the limited goal of training students to develop the required competencies to be an accountant, carpenter, lawyer, educator, graduate student, architect, or the like. Our concern, after all, is with the education of human beings. A carpenter, lawyer, technician, and so on, does not satisfy the goal of education if she practices her trade or profession in such a manner as to be open to condemnation as a person. So the character building aspect of education must be connected with the knowledge-gaining aspect. This means that an educated person needs to develop and hone his or her critical attitude and engage in critical self-reflection as well as critical inquiry of the transmitted knowledge claims of the culture (Adams 1997, 113). Thus the "attitudes that every educated person should possess" require that the educational system facilitate rational, critical inquiry and self-reflection.[5] Here we have identified a broad desideratum for general education.

Since a major aim of education is to enable students to participate in a critical democracy, to make sound moral and practical judgments and decisions, it is crucial that we, as educators, ensure that students have an understanding, acquired through a process of critical inquiry, of the context in which they live. There are, of course, justified worries that merely transmitting the received "canon" will leave out important oppositional points of view resulting in a stagnant culture promulgating the status quo. The prospect of cultural imperialism becomes a worry. But by connecting the character-building-function with the transmission-of-culture-function via the process of critical inquiry, we can help ensure that a liberally educated person achieves a **responsible freedom** preparatory for success in the human enterprises.

Disconnection/Tension

Unfortunately, "[t]here is a natural tension between a higher education system firmly rooted in a competitive, winner-take-all market economy and the notion of higher education as part of a free, open, egalitarian democracy" (Ikenberry 1997). This tension has led to an inversion of values with the result that the educational agenda resulting from the dominant focus on economic matters is disconnected from the view that "...higher education is a powerful instrument for the common good, in which the ultimate beneficiary is not just the individual, but the society as a whole"(ibid.) Another disconnect emerges. Understanding education as the process by which the society culturally generates and grows human beings requires that we relieve this tension and connect what appear to be disparate enterprises.

Not often enough do students hear informed discussions debating the career preparation function of education with the critical inquiry and character building function. Education is the process by which individuals develop and expand their powers, form their character, master the culture, and learn how to define and to live their lives and to participate in the society in fruitful ways. Education should prepare students for cultural criticism and advancement of the culture. For, although a student must learn and appropriate the culture, it is the subjection of that culture to critical inquiry that allows for freedom from the hegemonic views of the powerful or the trendy. Again, education has failed if the product of the educational system practices his or her trade or profession in such a manner as to be open to condemnation as a person. Education is, then, preparation for the three human enterprises: the moral, the civic, and the economic. It is the function of general education, by whatever name, to make the connection between the skills needed for the economic enterprise of career ascent and the character development and critical inquiry needed to participate effectively in the moral and civic enterprises.

Three Human Enterprises

The **moral** enterprise involves constituting and empowering ourselves and defining and living lives that are worthy of us as the particular human beings we are. In preparation for this enterprise students must be allowed the freedom necessary to take on the responsibilities of self and cultural development. Such freedom results when the educational system makes a systematic effort to enable the student's thoughts and decisions to be formed by a process of critical self-reflection and inquiry as opposed to the passive absorption of received knowledge claims. Since the moral is the most inclusive enterprise, it should provide the framework for the other human enterprises.

The **civic** enterprise focuses on fulfilling our responsibilities as members of society, including working with others to develop and sustain a society that is fit for human beings (Adams 1997; Buck et al. 1945). Thus the civic enterprise is part of the moral enterprise and depends heavily on the rational and critical inquiry of received knowledge claims as the fodder needed for the mediation of political disputes and the advancement of the culture.

The **economic** enterprise relates to the organization of work and creativity in providing the goods and services that we need or want. Obviously, sufficient economic success is required to meet certain moral or civic responsibilities: to provide for one's own and one's dependent's economic needs; to help others in need; to participate in determining and supporting the proper function of society—in so far as one is able. But the contemporary focus on the economic enterprise at the expense of the other human enterprises has led to an inversion of values as the notion of civic responsibilities is replaced with a concern for maximizing one's self-interests.

Inversion of Values

For a host of reasons (Adams 1997, 1991; Bellah et al. 1986), materialistic values, the modern conceptual framework of scientific naturalism and the economic enterprise with its focus on the rationality of the marketplace have become dominant at the expense of the moral and civic enterprises. As a result, education has become increasingly geared toward the needs of the economy. The disciplines tend to focus on specialization and in the current cultural climate that specialization is often at odds with, rather than complementary to the more traditional concern with preparing students for all of the three human enterprises. Too many students understand the sole function of education as embedded in the economic enterprise. The once prevalent liberal education has been replaced by career education, "with general or core education designed as the common denominator of various career-education programs" (Adams 1997, xvi).

To ensure a proper connection among the three human enterprises our educational purposes must be seen in the broader framework of our convictions concerning the worth of the individual. We must therefore recognize the importance of fostering individual development within a framework of rational and moral values. But not only must we focus on transmitting existing knowledge and values, we must also enable students to understand the need for and the methods of critical inquiry. Enabling students to engage in critical self-reflection and critical inquiry of received knowledge claims should be the core goals of a general (liberal) education. Working to instill these goals in a general education program has become more important and more difficult given the recent shift from the self-conscious aim of preparing students for the three human enterprises to the implicit goal of seeking "common educational qualifications needed for special career programs" (Adams 1997, 102). As the NCA definition of general education makes clear "it is not directly related to a student's formal technical, vocational, or professional preparation." We may take this to endorse the view that integrating one's career into one's identity and life and not integrating one's identity and life into one's career is the proper order.

General (Liberal) Education

A general (liberal) education is to be distinguished from the so-called **core** curriculum which focuses on the basic skills rather than the subject matter that all need to master in order to succeed in defining and living a life worthy of a human being. That is, a general education "is intended to impart common knowledge, intellectual concepts, and attitudes that every educated person should possess" **in order to** define and live worthy lives and participate in society in constructive ways. Again, a crucial component of a general education program is critical inquiry. For we are not seeking to grow virtuous people who simply receive and accept the dominant culture, but people with virtuous characters who seek to learn, appropriate and subject the culture to critical and creative inquiry. A general education, then, aims to liberate people from "the grip of forces that impact on them or pulsate in them so that they can take responsibility for their own identity, for their own beliefs, for their own actions, and for their own lives" (Adams 1997, 105). Although the well-worn label "critical thinking" is apt as a component of general education, it is so only when it is incorporated as an aspect of critical inquiry that involves the foundations of knowledge and investigations of serious moral, intellectual, and civic issues salient in the culture. That is, to put it succinctly, critical thinking must involve serious content.

Although the above understanding of the framework of a general education does not provide a simple recipe for constructing or identifying an adequate general education program, it does serve to set an image of what a general education requirement is intended to produce. Whether any particular program comports with this goal calls for judgment on the part of consultant-evaluators. Any accreditation agency must not shy away from these judgments, but they must be based on a coherent and compelling conceptual framework.

Are there key features to the image of the educated person that are crucial to structuring a general education component? In suggesting character building (critical self-reflection) and critical inquiry of transmitted knowledge claims in preparation for engaging successfully all three human enterprises, it appears that a liberally educated person must be capable of defining and living a life that can be justified by a process of critical assessment. General education, then, is preparation for freedom, for a self-directed life in a self-governing society. Our freedom is diminished to the extent that our thoughts and decisions are formed by unexamined assumptions and presuppositions. Thus, while it is important to learn and appropriate one's shared culture, it is necessary for one's freedom that one be able to critically engage the assumptions and presuppositions behind that culture so that the culture and the individual may be advanced.

Summary

With regard to the process of assessing general education or constructing an adequate general education program, the above suggests that the place to begin is with a "Purpose Statement" for general education. If an institution has no statement of purpose for its general education component, that may be telling. There are several key issues to be addressed. What is the image of the finished product that drives the program? How are the courses that make up the program connected? Is there recognition that a primary aim of the general education component is to help students define and live lives worthy of human beings? Is there a process in place by which the student learns the importance of and techniques needed for critical inquiry? Does the program provide a sustained opportunity for critical self-reflection and critical inquiry of received knowledge claims? Is there a recognition by the institution of the need to prepare students for all three human enterprises?

A simple list of courses under the rubric of "general (or Liberal) education" will not suffice. There must be an emphasis on the critical inquiry of received knowledge claims and a critical discussion of the basic character needed of a human being operating in the three human enterprises. What recommendations can the consultant-evaluator make for enabling a general education program to meet General Institutional Requirements needed for continued accreditation? Again, there is no recipe, but an understanding of the conceptual framework of general education can lead to judgments and recommendations tailored to specific programs. A general education program needs to involve a "framework of thought that defines the self, society, and the world in a way that gives us a comprehensive and comprehending orientation and purpose and provides us with principles of life criticism" (Adams 1997, 114). Since, as Ralph Barton Perry argues, "[d]emocracy is that form of social organization which most depends on personal character and moral autonomy," (1966) general education as delineated above is central to the function of the educational enterprise in a democracy. In sum, general education should function to connect the three human enterprises and should be conceptualized as central not ancillary to the educational process.

Notes

[1] North Central Association of Colleges and Schools: *Handbook of Accreditation*, September 1997. (Chicago: NCA), 23.

[2] John Henry Cardinal Newman, in H. Tristam, ed. *The Idea of a Liberal Education: A Selection from the Works of Newman*, (London: George G. Harraap, 1952), 30.

[3] *Handbook of Accreditation*, 1997, 45.

[4] E. M. Adams, *A Society Fit for Human Beings* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 113. As Adams tells us, "Good inquirers in any field know what they are about; they know how to criticize their efforts and to correct their mistakes; they operate with a framework of thought that provides them with principles of criticism and basic categories that define for them both knowledge and reality."

[5] For an excellent discussion along these lines see John Rury, "Inquiry in the General Education Curriculum," *The Journal of General Education*, 45(3) 1996.

[6] Stanley O. Ikenberry, "Defining a New Agenda: Higher Education and the Future of America," in *NCA Quarterly*, 71(4) Spring 1997: 448.

[7] Ibid.

[8] See E. M. Adams, *A Society Fit for Human Beings*. Also see Buck et al., *General Education in a Free Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), where it is argued that the function of general (liberal)education is to prepare students for the duties of citizenship.

[9] See Adams, *A Society Fit for Human Beings* and *The Metaphysics of Self and World* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991) and Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* (New York: Perennial Library, Harper & Row, 1986).

[10] E. M. Adams, *A Society Fit for Human Beings*, xvi.

[11] Ibid., 102.

[12] Ibid., 105.

[13] Ibid., 114.

[14] Ralph Barton Perry, *Realms of Value* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), selection reprinted in I. Scheffler, ed., *Philosophy and Education*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1966) 32.

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Developing a Strong General Education Program in a Single Purpose College

Leslie Fedorchuk
David Martin
Steven Kapelke

The Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design (MIAD) is a four-year art college. Its single purpose is the professional education of designers and fine artists. MIAD offers the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree (B.F.A.) in five fine art and four design disciplines. Students enroll at MIAD because of the quality of its studio programs–because they know that the education offered there will prepare them in unique ways for the visual professions they wish to enter. Our size (approximately 500 full-time students), faculty, and facilities blend to provide our students unique educational opportunities. The institution is enhanced by facilities that are designed to optimize the course of study that a student embarks on when coming to the college.

MIAD does not require the SAT or ACT for admittance. Students are admitted on the basis of their studio portfolios, which are reviewed by Admissions staff and faculty. Faculty and staff throughout the institution participate in the recruitment and retention of students; historically, MIAD has consistently attracted students whose visual work is very strong.

As is the case with many (perhaps all) single purpose institutions, MIAD has experienced significant challenges in creating and sustaining a strong general studies program. Many of the challenges stemmed from an institutional culture that in the past perceived general studies as a "service" functioning on the periphery of the studio areas. This resulted in little practical consideration for the area–in budgeting, staffing, and scheduling. Worse, it signified a "disconnect" between what students viewed as primary in their education–professional training in the visual arts and that which they saw as secondary or irrelevant.

Change began about eleven years ago. MIAD had an energetic, decisive new president, a thoughtful, new (though interim) dean and a general studies program that was weak in some areas and directionless overall. One of the first steps the president and dean took was to mandate a long-range study–and improvement–of the general studies program. This was in response to concerns raised during MIAD's initial NCA accreditation visit. More importantly, it was based on a strongly held belief by both these individuals in the importance of broad-based learning in the education of artists. This belief, and the institutional imperatives emanating from it, formed the basis for the eventual strengthening of the general studies at MIAD–to the point where the general studies now form a central part of the student experience and, more significantly, to the point where they have become an integral part of the institutional culture.

The process of change was not rapid, nor was it always smooth. A first crucial step to meaningful reform was to identify what was happening in our general studies classrooms. There was common concern about a lack of academic rigor. Significant efforts were taken to identify patterns of student behavior and student learning in the general studies; the results were deeply disturbing. Students drifted from class to class and year to year demonstrating thinking that often seemed weak and immature, isolated and disconnected. What was most profoundly disturbing about this situation was that the design and fine art these students produced was skilled, mature, and often highly sophisticated.

After two years of careful examination of purposes and practices, faculty and academic administration were now committed to change. At this juncture, two critical decisions were reached.

First, in 1993 the school boldly revamped its organizational structure. To increase efficiency and improve instructional quality, department chairs and faculty "area head" positions were dissolved. Departments became divisions, led by deans with extensive authority and responsibility. Full-time faculty could now focus entirely on the classroom and studio. Discussions of academic rigor and curricular change grew more insightful and faculty became more willing to think about change.

Second, in 1994 MIAD initiated a comprehensive, institution-wide curriculum review. This review dovetailed with the five-year strategic planning process. Each of the four divisions was charged with conducting its own curriculum review. In the Liberal Studies division, faculty met frequently to discuss comprehensive curriculum change. In the process they created a graduate profile–a composite list of skills and abilities that all art and design students must possess upon graduation. This list included both practical and ideal outcomes. Liberated from the routine of thinking in discrete courses, faculty engaged in lively discussion about student competencies, agreeing that students must possess improved critical thinking skills, strong writing and speaking skills, and the ability to become meaningfully involved in their communities.

Having identified the features of our composite student profile, division faculty then moved on the curriculum. The competencies of the profile we had constructed were radically different than the outcomes of our present curriculum. Working back from graduation to the freshman year, we reinvented our division. We revised all master course syllabi, increased oral and written literacy expectations for each course, designed hierarchies of performance objectives for each course and academic level, and sequenced course offerings with an intelligible shape. New standards for academic rigor were formed.

Many of our advanced-level humanities courses, due to their dependence on part-time faculty, varied in terms of academic rigor and expectations, were offered inconsistently, and too often seemed to water down their content for students considered "visual learners." We developed a new freshman level interdisciplinary course that stresses critical thinking, as well as a required advanced-level course on the history of scientific thought. Categories for regularly offered advanced-level humanities and science courses were developed; thus ensuring that these offerings would remain consistent. Freshman and sophomore composition became inquiry-based centering on themes (e.g., "seeing"), providing students access to more meaningful connective learning experiences. A "capstone" course was developed in which students connect ideas and challenges common to their studio majors and general studies experiences. To unify and broaden assessment, all writing courses now employ competency-based portfolio grading.

The result of this curricular review is a finite list of required offerings with a more discernible shape built on a hierarchy of performance objectives, a more refined understanding of our institution's mission, and an increasing emphasis on scientific thinking and method; there now exists a four-year writing sequence that prepares students to identify and successfully meet the demands of any writing situation.

Conclusions

What MIAD, as an institution, learned from this process has great applicability to other single purpose institutions. First, we discovered that the primary challenge in creating a strong general studies program isn't revising the curriculum, or being allocated additional resources, or improving the number or quality of the faculty, though these are certainly crucial steps in the process.

The primary challenge lies in the commitment from the college itself, which must be shared by all members of its instructional and administrative components. As an institution, we had committed ourselves to educating the whole person. In this regard, the leadership of the president was crucial. This commitment must also be communicated to and supported by the admissions office, which then becomes responsible for recruiting students who want an educational experience that includes strong offerings in writing, art history, philosophy, literature, and the sciences. A concern that was expressed more than once at the outset of the curriculum revision was that MIAD's students would react adversely to a more demanding Liberal Studies curriculum. Significantly, the position taken by the president and the executive director of enrollment services was that MIAD would instead see this as a recruitment opportunity; that we would direct our recruiting efforts at students (and parents) who valued the professional arts education the college offered while also seeking a postsecondary institution that values rigor in all areas of its educational programs. Interestingly, since the strengthening of the program, enrollment has continued to increase steadily and MIAD's admissions office cites the strength of the Liberal Studies program in all of its literature and other recruitment efforts.

An important moment in MIAD's quest to strengthen its general studies occurred during the strategic planning process mentioned above. One step in that planning process devoted itself specifically to determining the articulation of properties or qualities in the mission statement that would serve as objectives specifically for the general studies program. This may seem obvious, but we found that identifying the relationship of purposes (mission) and the development of strong programming in any area is fundamental to change, but is an activity that is often taken for granted. A further result of this review process has been renewed faculty involvement in institutional change and a reinforced sense of shared purpose.

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From the American Experience to Global Futures: A Model for Reforming General Education

Hueping Chin
Roger Young
Peter Meidlinger

Global Perspectives 21, the General Education Program at Drury College, seeks to prepare students for life in the next century. To that end, all students are required to take six interdisciplinary core courses that emphasize knowing our own cultural traditions, understanding world cultures, making ethical decisions, developing literacy in math and science, and anticipating how to approach future problems. The goals of these interdisciplinary courses and the rationale underlying them will be the focus of our presentation. We will also touch upon the range of challenges we have faced in reforming general education, including issues related to staffing, assessment, and student success and retention.

The First-Year Experience: Alpha Seminar

The faculty believed that the introductory course would be the linchpin for the success of the entire curriculum. As the first course in the Global Studies minor, the course would set the tone for the general education curriculum. We needed a course that would serve some very important functions, including:

- develop college-level writing, speaking, and critical thinking abilities;
- cultivate in students a sense of membership within the college community;
- give students a sense of who they are in relationship to their cultural heritage;
- help students clarify their own values and commitments;
- help students understand the importance of becoming global citizens.

These various goals are a response to three different kinds of concern among the faculty and staff. We wanted a content-rich course, a developmentally appropriate course, and a first-year experience course (meaning one where instructors would be attentive to the growing body of research on student development, retention, and student success). These three concerns remind us that the course is not about coverage nor solely about mastering a set of skills or body of knowledge, but rather represents an opportunity to educate the whole person. Especially once we began teaching the course, we began to see it as an opportunity to instill habits of mind and heart that would help our students develop character, contribute to community, and articulate their various commitments to themselves.

The result, *Alpha Seminar: The American Experience,* now in its fourth year, is a collaborative effort designed by faculty form various disciplines, student development staff, and students themselves. It is a year-long interdisciplinary mentor course, which means that one instructor works with the same 20-22 students as teacher, advisor, and mentor from the time they arrive on campus for orientation activities until they complete their freshman year in May. Alpha Seminar is divided into four separate units:

Fall Semester	Unit 1: The Individual and the Community Unit 2: Identity and Difference
Spring Semester	Unit 3: Public Interest, Private Welfare Unit 4: Life and Work

The overarching rationale of the four units can be articulated very simply: we are interested in understanding the conditions necessary for communities to flourish and for individuals to flourish within those communities. The communities we are concerned with are multiple: the classroom, the campus, the city, the nation, the world.

Moving from Local to Global

Ideally, Alpha Seminar lays the foundation for the other core courses, first, by developing their academic skills and, second, by introducing them to issues that will be developed further in the core courses. Global Awareness and Values Analysis, the two sophomore-level core courses, have closely related objectives. Values Analysis provides students with the means of ethical deliberation, with a special focus upon how ethics enables us to think through issues related to rights, obligations, the pursuit of social and economic justice, the environment, and so on. Global Awareness introduces students to global cultures and seeks to develop their knowledge and appreciation of the world's cultural diversity, to develop sensitivity in their encounter with diversity, and to learn to understand how social, economic, historical, and religious factors shape a culture's values, beliefs, and mores.

While the objectives of the course have remained stable, the course has undergone visible transformations. Initially the course had a strong sociological orientation with an emphasis upon developing the tools of the social sciences. Assessment instruments suggested, however, that students felt the course lacked robust illustrations of specific cultures. An interdisciplinary approach has since been adopted. Students continue to read sociological work, but they also read biographies, literature, and essays that engage students directly in the experiences of people from other cultures. From the biography of Gandhi and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* to Hanan Ashrawi's *This Side Of Peace*, students develop a more fully embodied understanding of cultures outside the United States.

Integrating the Natural Sciences

The sophomore-level courses touch upon present-day challenges faced by people everywhere on the globe. While these courses treat the social, economic, and historical roots of these challenges, the core courses offered by the natural sciences expose students to science's approach to the future. It consists of three courses: Mathematics and Inquiry (three credits), Science and Inquiry (six credits), and Undergraduate Research (three credits). Together, these courses have been designed to promote the development of literacy in both mathematics and science, stressing the relevance of mathematics to the physical world, the interconnected nature of the sciences, and participation in research.

The natural science sequence emphasizes the problem-solving aspect of science and the interdisciplinary nature of many of the problems we encounter. One of the principal goals is to help students understand that science is a process for understanding our universe and improving the quality of human life, and not the memorization of apparently unrelated facts. The laboratories are designed to give students first-hand experience with experimentation and open-ended investigation, while the discussion sections connect science with the real-world life of the students.

Into the Future

The general education curriculum culminates in Global Futures, a capstone course that calls upon students to draw upon their understanding of their own cultural heritage, math and science, world cultures, and ethics to imagine various scenarios of the future and our possible responses to those futures. We will touch upon how we attempt to prepare students for the wide scope of this course and how successful we are in that effort. In some ways, the assessment of Global Futures provides the clearest indication of how well our we are doing in preparing our students for the challenges of the twenty-first century, and we will discuss what our attempts at assessment tell us.

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General Education in Vocational/Technical Programs of a Comprehensive Community College

Kathy Brock

In 1775, Paul Revere sounded the warning, "The Redcoats are coming." About two years ago community college administrators and faculty sounded a similar warning, "The contextual learners are coming." Just as Revere's warning was meant to prepare the American colonists to engage British soldiers, the modern warning issued a challenge to community colleges to meet the needs of students with a penchant toward contextual learning. Contextual learning is the academic foundation of the more than 1,100 Tech Prep programs throughout the country. Approximately one-and-a-half million students are enrolled in these programs and over twenty-eight percentage are headed for community colleges. (United States General Accounting Office Report, GAO/HEHS-95-144.) (Sounders, 1996)

College Overview

Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) is a small, comprehensive, public two-year community college located in rural northwest Iowa. A part of a system that blankets the state of Iowa, NCC served as the initial pilot in the mid 60's for the providing of vocational/technical training to high school students from the surrounding area. The success of this pilot resulted in the passage of legislation, which established a system of vocational/community colleges statewide. NCC maintained its emphasis on the providing of quality vocational/technical training until 1988 when the college established its Arts and Science Program. The college enrolls 1300 credit students annually, with approximately 50% of the students enrolled in the vocational/technical programs and 50% enrolled in the college transfer Arts and Science Program. In addition the college has an annual enrollment of 28,000 registrations in non-credit continuing education.

Introduction

While proceeding through an NCA visit for reaccreditation in 1995 Northwest Iowa Community College discovered that the focus and implementation of general education within the college, especially the vocational/technical programs, was not consistent with the current focus and interpretation of general education by NCA. A number of areas related to general education were identified and the college was scheduled for a General Education Focused Visit in the fall of 1997. One of the most challenging components to be addressed in the two-year time span was the identification of specific courses within the vocational/technical programs that were of an appropriate rigor, and were presented in such a way as to be considered "general education" rather than "related instruction," and yet provided the instruction in such a way that would promote success in student learning.

NCA's Perspective on General Education

Throughout it's history NCA has held to the tenet that higher education involved breadth as well as depth of study. General education refers to that component which provides breadth. In 1983 the Commission approved the following statement on general education:

> *General education is "general" in several clearly identifiable ways: it is not directly related to a student's formal technical, vocational, or professional preparation; it is a part of every student's course of study, regardless of his or her area of emphasis, and it is intended to impart common knowledge, intellectual concepts, and attitudes that every educated person should possess. (Handbook of Accreditation, 1994-96)*

Although the definition of "general education" has remained consistent since that time we do find early references to related instruction. The *Handbook of Accreditation 1992-93* referenced the following:

> *General education at the postsecondary level is an essential element of undergraduate degree programs and a prerequisite to graduate degree programs.*

That same publication stated the following in relationship to "related instruction":

> *General education and/or a program of related instruction at the postsecondary level is an essential element of undergraduate certificate and diploma programs two or more academic years in length.*
>
> *Undergraduate certificate and diploma programs that extend as long as degree programs should provide for more than immediate vocational interests. Because of the strong vocational component in such programs, general education or related instruction or a combination of general education and related instruction may provide this broadening. "Related instruction" is drawn from the usage in vocational-technical education: instruction broadening a curriculum beyond purely vocational purposes, but closely associated with those purposes, and sometimes incorporated into vocational courses. Such instruction commonly provides for the development of knowledge and skills in language, mathematics, and human relations. Institutions should include in their discussion of this Requirement a statement regarding the purposes that related education is expected to serve and the ways in which related education is an essential part of the overall educational program.*

More recently GIR 16 requires institutions to:

> *...give evidence of its commitment to the importance of general education by including an appropriate component of general education in all of its programs of substantial length, whether they lead to certificates, diplomas, or degrees:... (Handbook of Accreditation, 1994-96)*

References to "related instruction" have been eliminated.

General Education/Related Instruction

As a truly comprehensive community college, NCC focuses on needs and wants of its different customer groups. The college recognizes that the focus and purpose of the three major educational areas–arts and science, vocational/technical, and continuing education–are very different.

In the Arts and Science Program the general education component was developed to be compatible with the customarily accepted/required course work for students transferring to a four-year institution.

One need only look at the statement of general education for the AAS Degree and Diploma programs that existed at the college at the time of the initial visit (presented below) to recognize that the college had placed general education in the context of supporting the occupational program in which a student was enrolled.

> *Vocational/technical programs at Northwest Iowa Community College are designed to prepare individuals for immediate employment. The general education component of those programs is an integral part of the education of the whole person in preparation for occupational success. General education is intended to impart common knowledge, intellectual concepts and attitudes enabling people to function effectively in society. Course offerings are designed to enhance employability, provide a foundation and opportunity for continuing education, and promote intellectual stimulation and development of citizenship skills.*

One of the first challenges NCC faced as it initiated a process to define, clarify, and reestablish its general education core was a singular understanding across the institution of the similarities and differences between "general education" and "related instruction." The first reaction of faculty was to oversimplify, looking at general education as instruction with few practical applications, while considering related instruction as ensuring that students could apply knowledge in the field they were entering. With this understanding faculty saw various segments of the educational community in conflict. The NCA general education requirements were seen to be in direct opposition to Tech/Prep, Skills 2000, Perkins legislation and various research supporting applied/contextual learning.

Sounders refers to the support given to the enhancement of learning that takes place when instruction occurs in an applied/contextual method:

> *According to contextual learning theory, learning is enhanced when students (learners) process new information or knowledge in such a way that it makes sense to them in their frame of reference (their own inner world of memory,*

> *experience, and response). This approach to learning and teaching assumes that the mind naturally seeks meaning in context—that is, in the environment where the person is located—and that it does so through searching for relationships that make sense and appear useful* (Caine and Caine, *Making Connection: Teaching and the Human Brain).*

Others who support a need for recognition of the variances in student learning styles also speak to a need for colleges to provide students with hands-on experiences as well as theory. (Hadfield,1995)

The Carl Perkins Act, which provides funding to both high schools and institutions of higher education for the providing of vocational education, was just recently reauthorized. It continues to require that academic and vocational education be integrated to result in increased student achievement in both academic and vocational competencies.

Northwest Iowa Community College agrees with the following philosophy:

> *The case for integrated contextual education and the requirements by professional, state, regional and national agencies for us to pursue high skill, technical curricula provides us with compelling reasons to pursue a contextually integrated and aligned educational process. (Bass, Foral, 1997)*

It was only after the institution defined applied learning as relating to both "general education" and "related instruction" that the faculty could proceed in redefining general education to meet current NCA requirements. Figure A illustrates the relationships of these terms as differentiated by this institution. The author does not imply that this relationship is the official interpretation of NCA. Rather it is this individual college's model based upon its understanding of NCA's definition of "general education" and "related instruction" and a desire to enhance instruction based upon current educational theories and research.

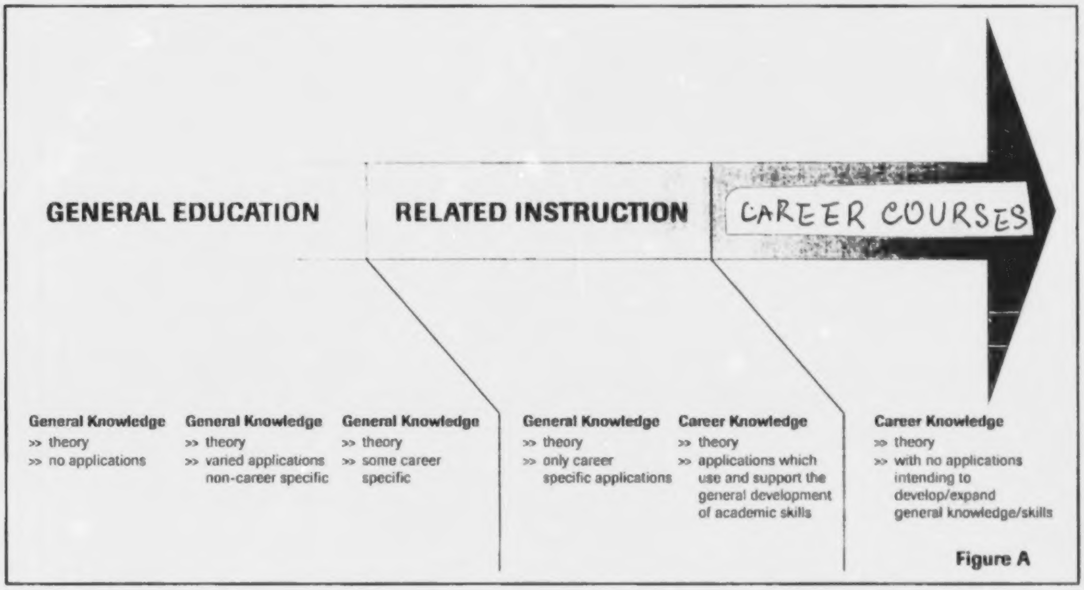
GENERAL EDUCATION
RELATED INSTRUCTION
CAREER COURSES
General Knowledge
>> theory
>> no applications
General Knowledge
>> theory
>> varied applications non-career specific
General Knowledge
>> theory
>> some career specific
General Knowledge
>> theory
>> only career specific applications
Career Knowledge
>> theory
>> applications which use and support the general development of academic skills
Career Knowledge
>> theory
>> with no applications intending to develop/expand general knowledge/skills

Figure A

The courses that were being offered to students in vocational/technical programs at the time of the 1995 NCA reaccreditation visit were truly related instruction. Most of them centered on general education competencies but focused almost entirely on applications from a single career area. After a year of discussion with faculty, the college agreed that any course that would meet the general education requirement must be compatible with one of the three descriptions presented in Figure A as "general education." As most of the courses in question were indeed focused on the instruction of general education competencies the major change required was an increase in the number of applications that would be applicable to a variety of career fields or to an individual's personal life.

With this new understanding of the possible interrelationship between "general education" and applied learning it was possible for faculty to identify compatibility among various current educational initiatives.

To prevent further confusion on the role of "related instruction" a group that consisted of the entire faculty, the administrative cabinet, and representatives of Student Services developed a definition for general education that was

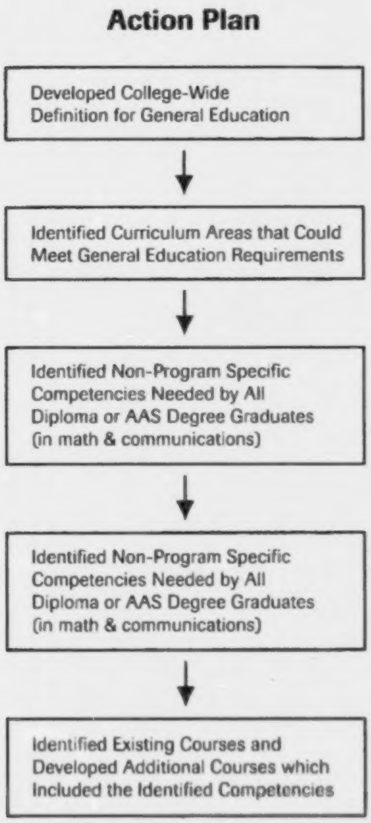
Action Plan
Developed College-Wide Definition for General Education
Identified Curriculum Areas that Could Meet General Education Requirements
Identified Non-Program Specific Competencies Needed by All Diploma or AAS Degree Graduates (in math & communications)
Identified Non-Program Specific Competencies Needed by All Diploma or AAS Degree Graduates (in math & communications)
Identified Existing Courses and Developed Additional Courses which Included the Identified Competencies

Figure B

applicable to *all* credit students, both those in the Associate of Arts Program and the vocational/technical programs.

The newly developed definition states:

> *General education is a common core of courses that provides students the opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge needed in a changing society.*

An NCC General Education Committee was established that included representatives from the general education faculty (transfer and non-transfer), the vocational/technical faculty, student services, and instructional administration. This committee served as an umbrella group which dealt with all general education issues raised in the initial NCA report. The committee refined the new general education definition by identifying specific general education curricular areas.

Two additional committees were established to address the key areas where the lack of "general education" as compared to "related instruction" had been identified–mathematics and communication. Each of the committees consisted of all faculty from the curricular area, the instructional deans, and the Vice President of Instruction. Technical faculty from individual programs were not members of these two committees. The initial task of each group was to identify general education competencies that should be considered developmental in nature, which should be considered the core competencies required of all diploma graduates, and which additional competencies were expected of all AAS graduates. It was only after these competencies had been agreed upon that the discussion proceeded to the identification of existing courses that would be appropriate for diploma level programs and that would meet the level of expectations for an AAS Degree. Figure C and Figure D illustrate the work of these two committees. Once these committees identified courses that met the different competency levels for general education they reviewed the context and delivery of each course to ensure it was compatible with one of the three descriptions identified as "general education" (Figure A). In relation to the descriptor that is most closely associated to "related instruction" it was suggested that greater than 75% of all applications should be general, non-program specific.

Future

Northwest Iowa Community College will continue to review and address issues relative to the success of the college's general education program in providing a broad based background required by students in a changing society. More specifically the college will be assessing the various courses identified as meeting mathematics and communication general education requirements for any variance of academic gain by students. While NCC subscribes to NCA's emphasis on general education it continues to value an applied/contextual learning environment.

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Appendix

Figure C

MATHEMATICS GENERAL EDUCATION COMPETENCIES

DEVELOPMENTAL	DIPLOMA	AAS	AA/AS
Whole Numbers Arithmetic Concept of Fractions	Reading Tables/Graphs Estimation Averages Critical Thinking --Story Problems Fractions Decimals Percentages Ratios Proportion Arithmetic Using Fractions Measurement Metric Geometry - Area, Perimeter Volume of, Circles, Squares, Rectangles and Triangles Calculator Usage Basic Formulas - Substitution - Not Manipulation	Quadratic Equations Formulation Linear Equations Simultaneous Equations	Competencies inclusive of diploma and AAS course requirements with allowances for areas of specialty and increased rigor

COURSES

DEVELOPMENTAL	DIPLOMA	AAS	AA/AS
LPN Math Arithmetic for College Students A Arithmetic for College Students B Algebra IA Algebra IB Algebra IIA Algebra II B	Math Foundations Trade Math	Basic Algebra/Trigonometry Elementary Algebra Algebra & Trigonometry I Algebra & Trigonometry II	Contemporary Math Statistics Calculus Intermediate Algebra College Algebra Trigonometry

Figure D

COMMUNICATIONS GENERAL EDUCATION COMPETENCIES

DEVELOPMENTAL	DIPLOMA	AAS	AA/AS
Basic grammar skills	Paragraph development	Differences between writing and conversational speech	Differences between informal writing and academic writing
Sentence structure skills	Advanced grammar skills	Characteristics of technical writing	Research and documentation skills
Thesis statement development	Paragraph and report organizational skills	Writing strategies: outlines, process descriptions, summaries and common memo, (letter, formats etc.)	Critical thinking skills (development arguments)
Spelling and punctuation skills	Editing and proofreading skills	Editing and proofreading skills	Stylistic devices
			Paraphrasing skills

COURSES

DEVELOPMENTAL	DIPLOMA	AAS	AA/AS
English 2200 English 2600 English 3200 English Brushup	Basic Communications	Technical Communications Business Communications	College Composition Interpretive Writing Creative Writing Speech

Each level is expected to have those skills listed in the previous level.

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Evaluating General Education from within the Curriculum

Peggy Peterson
Mark E. Nutter
Dannie R. Queen

Introduction

General education expresses those qualities a college wishes all its graduates to exhibit and also serves as a common core to all the curricula of a particular institution. When we made the transition from technical college status to Washington State Community College in 1991, each academic program met state distribution requirements for general and basic studies, but there was no common philosophy or goals for general education.

As a part of the self-study process in 1993-94, seven General Education Goals were developed by a committee, based on faculty discussion and approved by the faculty. The intent was that these goals would be inherent in the curriculum of each program. If students met the degree requirements, they would also meet the General Education Goals.

Beginning in 1994, each program was asked to demonstrate which goals were already being met within the curriculum and to take steps to close the gaps for goals that lacked support. To support this initiative, a general education review was developed to be conducted by the Curriculum Committee as a part of the academic program review process. The challenge now faced by the college is setting standards for assessment of those goals.

Defining the Goals

The seven general education goals were created as a way of defining the educational experiences that should be common to every graduate. However, those goals were meaningless unless they were reflected in the curriculum of each degree program. The General Education Committee and the administration decided the next step should be to review the entire curriculum to determine how the newly ratified goals were already supported by the objectives and assessment methods in each of the courses offered by the institution. This review served as a point of reference in later stages of the process.

General Education Goals

Upon completion of an associate degree program, a Washington State Community College graduate should have:

Communication: The ability to use various forms of communication more effectively both as a communicator and an observer.

Problem-solving: The ability to select and use appropriate and effective approaches and tools in solving a wide variety of problems (scientific, mathematical, social, personal).

Critical-thinking: The ability to think critically as demonstrated by evaluating information from multiple perspectives, drawing reasonable conclusions, and defending them rationally.

Independent, life-long learning: The ability and desire to continue as an independent learner engaged in a lifetime process of discovery.

Science and technology: The ability to use knowledge of technology and scientific principles to adapt to a technologically changing society.

World awareness: An awareness of the importance of international understanding in an increasingly interdependent global community.

Understanding values and cultures: An increased awareness of the similarities and differences which express the human experience.

Initial General Education Review

Between 1994 and 1996, each faculty member reviewed course syllabi in his or her area of responsibility and identified course objectives supporting the general education goals. A faculty member coordinated this college-wide effort and compiled a report for every program showing, course by course, the objectives and assessment methods that supported each of the goal statements. In this way, faculty were able to see how the general studies courses and major courses for a particular program combined to support general education. This initial review also served to illustrate which goals were poorly supported—or not supported at all.

Relationships between General Education Goals and Course Objectives

Asking faculty members to review their course syllabi in terms of support for general education had several beneficial outcomes: (1) it raised the awareness of general education as a mission of the college; (2) it involved all full-time faculty in review of the current state of general education; (3) it reinforced the idea that general education should be a part of major and elective courses as well as general studies courses; and (4) it resulted in each course syllabus being revised to show a link between the course and the general education goals it supported.

However, it soon became obvious that faculty had vastly different ways of interpreting the general education goals. While in the majority of cases the connections between goals and objectives were clear and appropriate, in other instances the relationship was missing. For example, several courses were identified as supporting the goal "Understanding Values and Cultures," but there were no objectives on the syllabi that connected with the goal in any way. In most cases, discussion with faculty revealed that a specific class activity did indeed support the goal but was not represented on the syllabus by a course objective. In other instances, the relationship between the goal and objective was weak. For example, one objective supporting "World Awareness" was identified as, "the student will be able to interchange between the metric and the U.S. systems using the unit/factor method." While this was certainly a worthwhile objective, it did not address the depth of world awareness clearly intended for this particular goal.

Relationships between Course Objectives and Assessment Methods

The connection between objectives and assessment methods was specific in some cases—particularly when it was incorporated into the language of the objective. For example, to support the "Problem Solving" goal the following objective was identified for a chemistry course: "The student will demonstrate through responses to objective and subjective questions on tests and quizzes an understanding of the principles underlying chemical solutions acid/base, and the chemical and physical properties of elements and compounds." More often, however, the syllabi listed generic assessment methods without indicating a direct relationship to specific objectives. In nearly every case, the level of attainment for satisfactory performance was stated at the course level rather than the objective level.

Defining Standards

By 1996, it was clear that the process needed additional input if it was to resolve the disconnect between goals, objectives, and assessments. A new ad hoc, all-faculty General Education Committee was formed to find a solution. The committee recommended that an expanded review of general education become part of the academic program review process. The committee suggested standards by which a program could demonstrate that the goals of general education were being satisfactorily supported and assessed. Essentially, each program would be required to show that no fewer than four course-level objectives *clearly* supporting each general education goal existed within the total program. This minimum level of compliance was established after considerable discussion. The committee felt that a goal could not be truly addressed within a program if fewer than four course objectives supported it. Program faculty were also asked to identify the method of assessment for these objectives. This proposal was presented to the Curriculum Committee, which adopted it as the college standard. The Curriculum Committee was also designated to review and recommend for approval or rejection each general education review. Additionally, the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs had final authority for approval of each program's approach to general education.

Implementation of the General Education Program Review

A form was created to facilitate general education review, and it became part of the documentation required for the five-year cycle of academic program reviews. The use of the new form made it easier for programs to identify strengths and weaknesses in the general education portion of their curriculum. Programs were encouraged to find ways of repairing deficiencies before submitting their reviews to the Curriculum Committee. This process resulted in programs taking a much closer look at general education and in some cases adding objectives and changing courses to strengthen the overall program.

The Review Process

The first two years of this expanded general education program review process brought mixed results. Program faculty did carefully examine their curriculum in light of support for general education, but when weak areas were discovered few curricular changes were made to strengthen them. The Curriculum Committee passed all of the general education reviews but one, sending it back to the faculty with a request to strengthen support for the "World Awareness" goal. Little attention was paid to specific assessment methods for objectives supporting the general education goals. The Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs had reservations about approving some of the general education reviews, but did so after talking with program faculty about her concerns over weak areas in their approach to general education.

Year Three of General Education Program Review

As the college entered year three of the general education program review process, the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs met with the new group of faculty beginning the review process and requested that they focus more on supporting the overall meaning of each of the general education goals as well as defining specific assessment methods for individual objectives supporting those goals. She also met with the Curriculum Committee to ask that they be more discriminating in their review of each program's approach to general education.

Conclusion

The process so far has built upon the strengths already inherent in the college's curriculum. While continuing to meet the guidelines of the Ohio Board of Regents for general education in terms of specific course requirements, the college has also made an effort to evaluate the degree to which the general education goals are integrated throughout the general studies courses and major courses that make up each degree program. Much work remains in the area of specific assessment techniques for general education outcomes, but the connections between goals, objectives, and assessments are gradually being strengthened.

Teaching and Assessing Problem Solving

An Example from Automotive and Diesel Truck Systems Technology

Dannie R. Queen, Program Director and Associate Professor

Course: ADTS 236 Fuel Pump Servicing and Testing

General Education Goal: Problem Solving

Supporting Course Objective: At the conclusion of the course, the student will be able to calibrate fuel pumps on test stands.

"Just use plain old common sense, son," my dad used to say. Putting things in a logical sequence to work out a problem takes common sense, but today we describe this ability as problem solving or critical thinking. The big question is, how do we teach these skills in a highly technical field such as Automotive/Diesel Technology?

Over the past 13 years, I've continually tried different teaching methods to improve students' problem solving and critical thinking skills. What seems to work best for me is to have them disassemble and study the technical nomenclature of a particular fuel injection pump. The students' next step is to learn how all the parts work together, then reassemble the pump and go through the calibration process on an injection pump test stand.

To assess their skills, students are given a written exam on pump operation and then required to calibrate a pump on the test stand using the manufacturer's specifications. In order for the students to be successful, they must complete the calibration process in a logical, sequential manner.

It is essential that Associate Degree graduates of the Automotive and Diesel Truck Systems program acquire and practice problem solving skills during their educational experience. Employers now seek out Associate Degree recipients because they require less on-the-job training. Students with strong problem solving skills are among the first to be hired after graduation.

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Assessing General Education in a Comprehensive Community College

Paul W. Batty
Christine Frances Briggs

Henry Ford Community College (HFCC), a comprehensive institution with annualized unduplicated headcount of 22,000 and FTE of 7500 in Dearborn, Michigan, has traumatically reexamined its general education requirements for the last three years. Although we have not yet assessed the success of our new approach, we believe that our experience can help to understand the issues facing community colleges that set out to examine and/or revise their general education requirements. At HFCC, we have adopted a philosophy of general education based on assessment of cognitive experiences, but we still require completion of specified courses for graduation. How can an institution marry these two approaches through assessment? What is the most appropriate method for assessing core abilities or cognitive experiences? Should the experiences be measured only in required courses, or can other classes provide the competencies?

These questions are particularly compelling for community colleges with their dual focus on career and academic education. How can a community college create general education assessment measures that meet the needs of two diverse student populations: those who seek terminal degrees and certificates tailored to employment and those who intend to transfer to pursue a baccalaureate degree? Some colleges have simply revised the general education curriculum and course outlines to fit identified competencies such as precise writing, critical reading, problem solving, logical reasoning skills, and independent thinking skills. Other colleges attempt to measure across-the-curriculum general education. Many colleges advocate various versions of portfolio assessment as an appropriate measurement tool for "general education" embedded across the curriculum.

Given that HFCC designed one of the first faculty-driven models for instructional assessment, we believe that our institution can contribute to the development of a faculty-endorsed approach to general education. The discussion of general education assessment at Madison Area Technical College in the Spring 1997 *NCA Quarterly* (Piuma & Wilson) outlines a process for establishing a plan. In this article we will discuss the adoption of an institutional philosophy for its general education program, the implications of various core abilities or cognitive experiences for assessment, alternative assessment techniques, and relationships between general education and program assessment.

A Philosophy of General Education

In its March 1995 comprehensive evaluation, the North Central Association evaluation team recommended that Henry Ford Community College document its development of a philosophy of general education. Subsequently, the Commission's ten-year reaccreditation of the college required a June 1997 report of that process. HFCC adopted a philosophy that defines general education as courses and/or experiences that enable students to attain the knowledge and skills needed by every college graduate. We believe that general education establishes a foundation of skills and understandings to enable success in employment and/or further education. In line with its belief that general education competence should be defined by the college to meet the needs of the external communities in which its graduates must function, HFCC collected and restated expectations identified by employers, alumni, and universities.

In May 1996, HFCC adopted the recommendation of its College Senate that "cognitive experiences" embodying the general knowledge and skills expected of all HFCC graduates should provide the foundation for the College's requirements:

> *The Senate recommends that Cognitive Experiences will form the philosophical framework for general education at HFCC with the understanding that 1) the specific cognitive experiences will be identified during the 1996-97 year under the leadership of the Instructional Assessment Committee and 2) the associate degrees may also meet the cognitive experiences through curricular patterns so as to protect the transferability of programs and courses.*

The expectations were to be defined by faculty, alumni, advisory committees, potential employers, and senior colleges and universities.

General Educational Cognitive Experiences

The HFCC Senate assigned the further development of the philosophy and its application to its Assessment Committee, which had surveyed faculty, staff, advisory committee members, and potential employers to discover their expectations of general education and skill levels for HFCC graduates. More than forty expected skills or competencies were then condensed into ten clusters or factors that were identified by at least two of the surveyed groups:

- be able to communicate effectively
- be effective problem-solvers and critical thinkers
- have the ability to utilize technology in gathering of information and in other program-related areas
- be able to understand the foundations and operations of the American experience and its relationship to other diverse cultures and experiences
- be knowledgeable in the humanities and the arts
- demonstrate quantitative literacy
- be able to demonstrate scientific literacy
- demonstrate the interpersonal skills necessary to be successfully employed
- demonstrate health awareness
- be life-long learners

A second round of analysis pinpointed four areas chosen by all the responding publics:

- communication
- access of information through technology and other sources
- an understanding of the American experience
- problem solving/critical thinking

In October 1996, the Senate endorsed the four cognitive experiences as valid, since they were held in common by all the external communities. The Assessment Committee then convened four faculty forums in November to clarify the wording of the College's expectations, and edited the forums' recommendations.

In January 1997 Henry Ford Community College adopted a statement of General Education Competencies developed by the forums and submitted by the College Senate and its Assessment Committee:

> *All associate degree recipients from Henry Ford Community College will be able to demonstrate:*
>
> *(1) proficiency in reading, writing, and communicating orally in Standard English;*
>
> *(2) computer literacy in the retrieval, analysis and evaluation, processing, and delivery of information in order to participate in a technologically-oriented society;*
>
> *(3) understanding of the foundations and operations of American social/political institutions and culture in the context of a diverse global community;*
>
> *(4) critical thinking and problem solving skills in addressing a problem or situation described verbally, graphically, symbolically, or numerically.*

Through the processes of shared governance, the cognitive experiences had become expressed as exit competencies expected of all HFCC associate degree graduates. Some degrees (e.g., the Associate in Arts) were expected to require specific courses articulated with transfer institutions to accomplish the cognitive experiences. Other programs might accept demonstrated competence based on data other than specific course completion. The HFCC Assessment Committee was assigned the task of how students would meet the general education outcomes and how the institution would know that they met them.

Alternative Assessment Techniques

To begin the process of assessing such competencies independent of required course credits, the Assessment Committee requested an inventory of learning activities that contribute to a student's meeting the cognitive experiences. We hoped that we might find the already required general education courses providing the cognitive experiences we were now requiring. Of course, the task was not that simple. Although several teachers of the required courses provided examples of assignments that embodied specified cognitive experiences, no standard syllabus guaranteed that each graduate would have the competence.

In the past when our general education requirement was a list of courses, students met the requirement by passing the courses, and we knew they met the requirement by seeing a record of successful completion of the courses on their transcript. Now we had to decide how a student would have demonstrated specific competencies, perhaps independently of course requirements. In order to uphold our own standards, we expect 100% of our graduates to meet these graduation criteria (or they do not "graduate"). If we had only a few potential graduates a year, we could consider a written and oral "qualifying exam" period in which the faculty could observe our candidates demonstrating their competence. When we hope to number our graduates annually in the thousands, we must find some more efficient means for them to meet the requirements. Our first task was "simply" to describe how our potential graduates would show us their competence.

Fortunately, we could learn from the innovation of others. We quickly decided to avoid value-added assessment as a means to determine growth relative to stated general education objectives. Not only were some institutions confounded by drops in skills levels among sophomore students, but also many found it very difficult to assert validity and reliability if students did demonstrate the desired improvement. To quote State University of New York College at Fredonia, "we cannot say definitively that higher scores, when they occur, are attributable to course work specifically associated with the general college program. Because the combination of courses taken by each student on the way to the degree is so varied, we can probably never get further than informed, but uncertain, judgments about what the curriculum is doing" (Hurtgen 64).

Although we do administer the CAAP test every three years to measure the success of our students in critical thinking skills in relation to national norms, we have never advocated the profusion of tests as a means of assessment. Too often, from the student perspective, the assessment test is one last (seeming meaningless) hurdle prior to graduation. Given that institutions are extremely reluctant to elevate passage of a test over completion of course work, performance on assessment tests usually has no effect on a student's graduation. As Trudy Banta aptly concludes, "student motivation to perform conscientiously on tests required for purposes of assessment must be considered a major concern" (Banta 467).

What other means of assessment might be most appropriate for HFCC? A year was devoted to studying the feasibility of adopting either the Alverno or the Seybert model of portfolio assessment. Members of the Instructional Assessment Committee visited the Alverno campus to witness the dedication of faculty and the commitment of students and participated in workshops led by Jeffrey Seybert on the Johnson County Community College model of institutional assessment. The effectiveness of portfolio assessment in promoting student accountability could not be denied, and the Instructional Assessment Committee did venture so far as to delineate the nature of eight portfolio assignments to measure HFCC's cognitive experiences. We then grappled with the logistics. Would students and/or teachers maintain the portfolio? How would we verify the authenticity of student work? Would the assignments be collected in some giant institutional record hall or would all the entries be on computer disk? Would we maintain portfolios on all 10,000 students who declared their intent to graduate? Would this process seem like an additional burden that would result in early transfer to avoid the portfolio requirement? Would students be denied graduation if portfolios were incomplete? Ultimately, the Alverno approach, with its intense requirements of time and commitment, seemed more suitable to a small private institution than to an urban community college. The Seybert model seemingly offered a more promising variation on the portfolio by measuring institutional effectiveness, not individual student progress. We liked the evaluation of programs provided by the Seybert model, but we were concerned that it would take years to generate statistically valid information from his approach. We also did not see how this approach would allow us to ascertain whether students had satisfied the cognitive experiences.

So now we're back to reviewing our required courses to guarantee that all candidates for graduation will have experienced the cognitive challenges of the general education competency requirements but not the increased demands implicit in portfolio assessment. In "Graduation Requirements, General Education, and the Liberal Arts," Brinkman suggests that in general, community colleges do match general education requirements and curricular offerings since such a correlation facilitates student transfer between two- and four-year colleges, an important factor for the 40% of HFCC students who intend to transfer. Another reason for reinforcing the traditional general education core is that Michigan's community colleges have sustained criticism for not emphasizing general education with general education averaging only three course sections in ten offered (Raisman 14).

We next considered whether it might be possible to incorporate all the cognitive experiences into the required general education sequence. It was logical that cognitive experience 3, understanding the foundations of American social/political institutions, be embedded within our required political science/social science classes. The English sequence would naturally address cognitive experience 1, proficiency in reading, writing, and communicating orally in Standard English. Critical thinking could be demonstrated in both political science and English courses.

We have struggled most with defining levels of expectation for computer literacy. Distinguishing between the necessary entry level skills for our students to succeed in our current classes and the exit competence we expect to characterize an associate degree graduate has led us to reconsider whether the general education level of computer usage skill is *computer literacy* or *information* (i.e., research/reasoning/critical thinking) *literacy*.

At a different assessment level we must be concerned with quality control. How do we check on ourselves to be sure we really require what we say we do? In our previous system we did not permit any candidate (i.e., 100% standard) to graduate until the registrar had examined the transcript and certified that the required courses had been passed. We could exercise greater quality control by pulling a sample of those decisions and checking to be sure that they were accurate. At that level we might be satisfied with 99% accuracy. Also, occasionally we could check syllabi, course-wide tests, and subsequent student performances to assure ourselves that the courses we required really did the kind of things we thought we meant when we required them. For that kind of quality checking we might settle for 90% accuracy.

General Education and Program Assessment

Another issue that HFCC has had to face concerns differences between general education skills in reasoning and specific career or subject matter thinking skills. In other words, are critical thinking skills held to a different standard for an educated person choosing to purchase a car, a stock issue on the Internet, a concert ticket, or to vote for a senator, an alderman, a condominium board member *(all general education tasks)* than they are for choosing a certain gauge for a wiring task, a certain wood for a construction project, a certain air-fuel ratio for proper combustion, a certain treatment for a wound, a certain brand for a prescription, a certain approach to question a suspected criminal, a certain line of proof for a mathematical problem, a certain site for a business, a certain style for motivating employees, a certain key for a musical performance, a certain procedure for maintaining a complex machine *(all specific education skills)?*

HFCC has chosen to operationalize our general education critical thinking skills by teaching and assessing them in political science and English composition classes, where we believe that the general responsibilities of a citizen and scholar [14th grade level] are experienced and tested. In order to pass our college-wide-required government and composition courses, students must demonstrate critical thinking skills in solving the kinds of problems that face anyone in contemporary society. We have also chosen to assess each program's means of developing *specific* problem solving skills. As part of their regular assessment plan, program faculty determine how well students have demonstrated discipline-specific critical thinking skills in solving the problems of their chosen career or major field of study.

None of the discussions to set graduation criteria was easy. Disagreements were as great among academic transfer subject areas as among technical careers. What most employers, alumni, faculty, and other community members seem to mean by *oral communication* skills is not at all what is required in our public speaking course. Non-mathematicians apparently believe that arithmetical ability, understanding fractions and ratios, and basic statistical reasoning are necessary for general education; solving quadratic equations is not. Most faculty long for students who can spell and punctuate satisfactorily; English faculty believe every educated person should be able to criticize/evaluate contemporary fiction. In addition to the college-wide requirements, HFCC Associate of Arts graduates must successfully complete general education in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Graduates of our technical programs do not have similarly broad requirements.

Overall, the general concern of accreditation is institutional and program assessment, and eventually we will be concerned with the success of each program's students in meeting the general education graduation requirements. We may want to know what percentage of students entering a program successfully complete one or more of the competencies. For that evaluation we might be satisfied with a 50% standard. Or we might want to know what percentage of a program's *candidates* for graduation [defined, perhaps, as completing 60 semester credit hours] had successfully demonstrated all the general education outcome competencies. For that we might expect 85%, but consider changing the way the program works in order to get closer to 100% [and, of course, we would still assume that 100% of the program's *graduates* had demonstrated the outcomes].

Program assessment questions like these are issues we all have to confront in order to carry out Assessment Plans for North Central Association accreditation. The questions must be pursued by the widest possible college communities, including students, alumni, employers, and transfer-receiving institutions. The discussions will be neither quick nor easy, but the answers will be better in proportion to the universality of participants' involvement.

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The General Education Portfolio in the Two-Year College: A Learning Experience for Faculty and Students

Esther DiMarzio
Laurie Hoecherl

Profile

Kishwaukee College is a comprehensive two-year college situated on 120 acres in Malta, Illinois, about 70 miles west of Chicago. The College opened in 1968 with an initial enrollment of 620 students. The current enrollment is 4,500. The College is fortunate to have strong community support, which is evident in the shift over the last 30 years from five small temporary buildings to the present 340,000 square foot facility.

Overview of Student Assessment at Kishwaukee College

In a Student Assessment Handbook the students are informed that assessment is a systematic process of gathering information regarding the effectiveness of the college and its students. Effective assessment evaluates the information and uses the results in making decisions about ways to improve. Kishwaukee College uses multiple measures to assess students during their time at Kishwaukee as well as after.

The following is a brief overview of assessments that apply generally to all students enrolled in Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Engineering, and Associate of Fine Arts degree programs.

At Entry	Placement Tests (math, English, reading) Academic Profile Test
During	Satisfaction Survey In-class Measures: Foundation Knowledge Critical Thinking Appreciation
At Exit	**Portfolio** Academic Profile Test
After Graduation	Graduate Survey Other Surveys

Assessment provides information to:

- **students** about their educational experiences
- **the college** to continuously improve the teaching/learning process to benefit students
- **college leaders** to help plan for future needs
- **the community** to increase awareness and understanding of the college's role
- **accrediting bodies and organizations** to help them evaluate the college's success in accomplishing its mission and purposes

Kishwaukee College is committed to the development of its students. Assessment helps all parts of the college stay focused on that goal.

Rationale for Requiring a Degree Portfolio

Kishwaukee College required a degree portfolio for the first time from spring 1998 graduates. This device provides needed information about our graduates' abilities to understand, apply, and appreciate the content of general education courses. The portfolio is designed to give us information about our students' reading, writing, thinking, and calculating abilities. It further provides us information about the students' appreciation for the value of their first two years of general education at Kishwaukee.

Portfolio Requirements

The degree portfolio is a collection of six items:

1. an explanation of the selection process used by the student
2. an example of course mastery of facts, terms, and concepts
3. thinking examples (an early example and a later example to show growth)
4. a mathematical application or scientific problem solving example
5. a multi-source paper example
6. an identification of a most satisfying experience at Kishwaukee

By evaluating these six items, we are better able to determine the quality of students' work and their ability to be successful as they leave us.

Notifying the Students About the Portfolio Requirement

We knew communicating this new requirement to students would be a challenge. Students were notified through many avenues.

- Packets of information were mailed to students.
- Notices were placed in the class schedule book and the college catalog.
- Articles were written in the student newspaper.
- Since all general education students must take English 103 or English 109, English instructors presented portfolio information in these classes. This included a handout, a Student Assessment Handbook, and a video.

  The video was particularly effective. It featured vice-president Dr. Diane McNeilly, explaining why the college was requiring the portfolio, including the benefits to the students and to the college. After the first year, Dr. McNeilly revised the video. She added interviews with two students who completed portfolios and a faculty reaction from English/reading instructor Beth Parks who served on the evaluation team.

- All general education faculty were encouraged to remind students through their syllabi and during class when discussing an assignment that would be appropriate for their portfolios.

[Note: Beginning in the fall 1999 semester the College will have an Assessment Day each September that will include sessions on the portfolio. This will eliminate the need for the presentations in English classes.]

Collecting the Portfolios

When a student applied for graduation last spring, the student was mailed a packet that included the following:

- Explanation of the portfolio (again!) with due date and location for turning in the portfolio
- Cover pages and evaluation rubrics for each of the six items
- Prompts for Item #1 (the self-reflection letter)

When the students turned in their portfolios, they were given a signed receipt. [Note: Only one student did not turn in his portfolio last spring.]

Evaluating the Portfolios

The twelve member evaluation team reviewed the first 128 portfolios in June 1998. Volunteers were paid a stipend to work for five four-hour sessions. The first day was used as a norming session. The team evaluated one portfolio as a group, then one portfolio with a partner. The second, third, and fourth days were spent with six groups of two evaluating a set of portfolios. A half hour at the end of each of these days was reserved for discussion. The last day was used to evaluate the portfolio process and to make revisions on printed information.

The evaluation team members revised the student handouts to clarify expectations for the students. They also revised the rubrics to better reflect our expectations. They decided in the future to share the evaluation rubrics with the students as part of the portfolio development handout. The students' consideration of the rubrics as they select appropriate items will be another measure we can use to determine their critical thinking abilities.

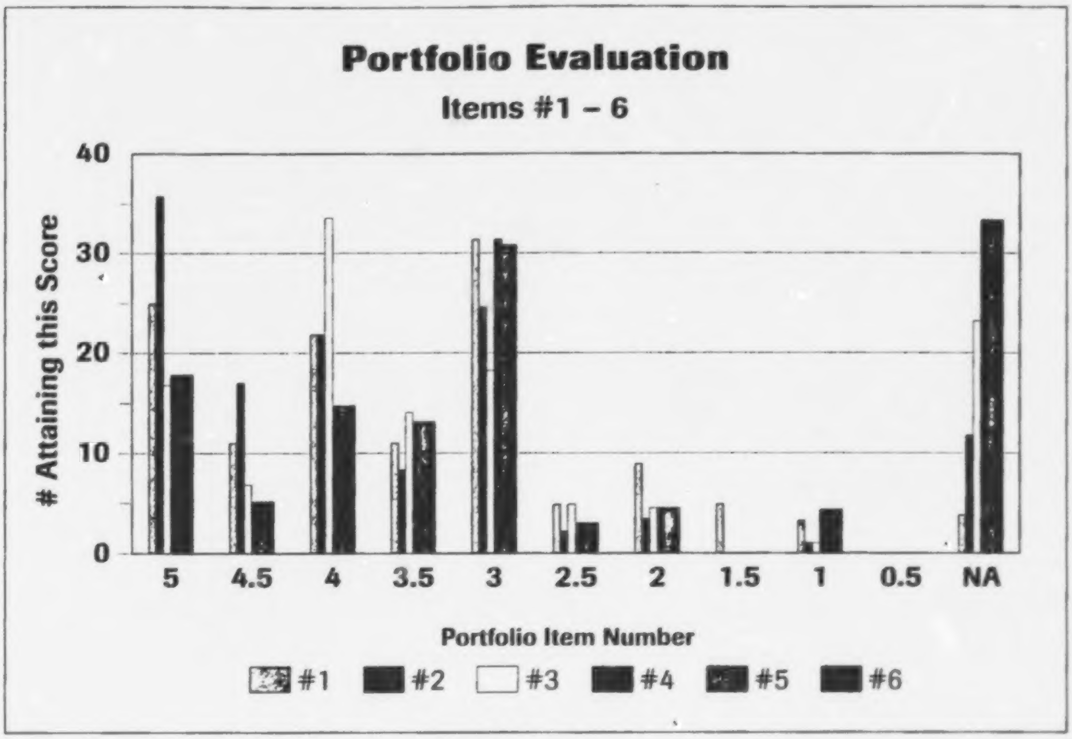
Rewards of Using Portfolios to Assess Students

The rewards for implementing this graduation requirement were many. The faculty evaluating the portfolios were able to see that most of our students are accomplishing and in many cases exceeding our general education objectives. The faculty were able to see, share, and discuss the broad array of learning experiences that we are providing for our students. The evaluation team shared their perceptions and suggestions with the entire faculty during the fall 1998 semester. In addition, Beth Parks expressed the team's sentiments in a letter she distributed to the faculty. [Included at end of article]

Many students shared their thoughts on the positive aspects of completing the required portfolio. The most frequent type of comment was the revelation that they had grown as persons or students while they were at Kishwaukee and appreciated what happened to them. The evaluators felt that the portfolio is a positive growth experience for the students and for themselves. The experience was rewarding, uplifting, inspirational, and educational.

Results

The team evaluated the portfolios using a scale of **one** (does not meet criteria) through **five** (exceeds criteria). The graph that follows summarizes the results and shows that the majority of our students scored **three** or higher. As Beth Parks states in her letter, the portfolios provide evidence that "almost all of our students are meeting our general education objectives and more than a few are exceeding them. The quality of work in the portfolios was impressive, and it was evident that most students took the assembly and construction of the portfolio seriously." The high number of NAs (not appropriate) indicated to the team that we needed to do a better job of explaining our expectations for each item.



Main Area of Concern: Correct Documentation in Multi-Source Papers

The committee was very pleased that so many students turned in research papers from classes other than English. However, one concern was that students needed more help with writing and documenting these papers. As a result, English instructor Pat Kramer developed a packet of information for instructors, and English instructor Esther DiMarzio developed a handout and gave presentations to the faculty.

Conclusion

The purpose of the portfolio is to make sure our graduates are leaving with an appropriate education. Even if a student transfers in and attends our college only one semester, as a graduate of Kishwaukee College it is our responsibility to verify that the student leaves well prepared for the next stage of his or her life.

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August 19, 1998

Dear Colleague,

Last June I was one of the twelve individuals who had the pleasure of reviewing student portfolios for the first time. I use the word *pleasure* quite intentionally. If you were to ask any of the members of the committee, I feel confident they would use the same word. Our week as readers unfolded like this: committee procedures and rubrics were established on Monday, portfolios were reviewed by pairs of readers on Tuesday through Thursday, and on Friday we debriefed. It became evident during the debriefing that our experience and perceptions needed a broader audience. I was so gratified by what I saw during the week and what I heard my colleagues saying on Friday that I volunteered to fill you in on what transpired.

First and foremost, almost all of our students are meeting our general education objectives and more than a few are exceeding them. The quality of work in the portfolios was impressive, and it was evident that most students took the assembly and construction of the portfolio seriously. (I'll admit to checking out a couple of portfolios of students who told me they were just going to "throw something together." I'm happy to report that their portfolios weren't thrown together; they reflected the careful consideration and thought that I knew those students were capable of.) Students were honest in their statements to us about both the portfolio and their education. Some grumbled about the portfolio being sprung on them; others said that they hadn't saved samples of their work. Still others--most others, in fact--remarked on how amazed they were at their growth during the time spent at Kishwaukee College. They appreciated the opportunity to review years worth of work and see concrete evidence of the positive effects of their education. It is not an exaggeration to say that the assembly of the portfolio is a learning experience in and of itself. The twelve of us felt proud of our students.

It is also fair to say that we feel proud of our faculty. The work represented in the portfolios is a direct result of your efforts. More than once I made my reading partner look at a great assignment one of you had dreamed up. It was also heartening to see the efforts you put into responding to students' work. (Some students submitted work with teacher corrections and comments on them.) There is no doubt that we, as a faculty, are designing good learning experiences which provide students opportunities to grow, to apply general education concepts to a broader context, and, equally important, to self-reflect. There is also evidence across the curriculum that we are teaching for higher levels of thinking. Finally, I had something of a surprise in reviewing the research papers. I assumed that all students would submit their English 103 research paper to fulfill this requirement. Wrong! Writing across the curriculum is so ingrained at Kishwaukee College that more that half the research papers came from other classes. (As an English teacher, I want to thank you for that.)

While the portfolio review worked well this first time, we have already generated some ways to fine tune the process. We know that we need to communicate information about the portfolio requirement to students better. The informational videotape will be revised, and we hope to have students included on tape. We have also amended the rubrics, and we intend to make them available to students as well as faculty. We think students will find them useful because they will know the expectations of the portfolio review team. You might find them useful as you design or modify activities for your classes. Secondly, it would be beneficial to students if we identify particular assignments as being appropriate for the portfolio. Being familiar with the various sections of the portfolio and the rubric will help you in making recommendations to students. Finally, we realized that with the amount of writing being done across the curriculum that the time is ripe for English faculty to develop some research writing guidelines. A comment was made during the debriefing--not by an English teacher!--that we need to be more consistent in how we ask students to write research papers. The problem of plagiarism could, perhaps, be minimized by doing this.

I found the experience of reviewing portfolios to be very gratifying. Because I teach mostly first semester freshmen, sometimes it seems I don't get to see the results of my efforts. (I suspect that I speak for some of you as well.) Well, over the course of three days, I got to see the results of my efforts and yours, and I was impressed. I saw first-hand the gains students had made and the appreciation they have for what they achieved and for the opportunities they were given at Kishwaukee College. We are making a difference. Another benefit of the experience was sitting with eleven other people and discussing Kishwaukee, our curriculum, and our students. I was energized by the dialogue; it reminded me of how much I respect my colleagues and how much we share in common, regardless of our discipline. If you can fit it in your schedule, consider being a portfolio reader next year.

If you have any questions about the process or suggestions or comments to make, please catch any of the people listed below. I know I've gone on (and on and on . . .), but someone else would happily give you their take on the experience. I hope the summer rejuvenated you. I look forward to working with you this coming year.

Sincerely,

Beth Parks

Beth Parks

Portfolio Review Team: Esther DiMarzio, Linda Gruber, Laurie Hoechrel, Pat Kramer, Bob Lewis, Terry Martin, Neal McKenna, Diane McNeilly, Tim Mullen, Beth Parks, Dennis Ragan, Kathy Schnier

The Institutional Portfolio: A Performance-Based Model for Assessment of General Education

Jeffrey A. Seybert
Kathleen A. O'Hara

Institutional Profile

Johnson County Community College (JCCC) is a comprehensive, single campus, suburban community college located in Overland Park, Kansas, in the Kansas City, Missouri, metropolitan area. The college was founded in 1969 and occupied its present 240 acre campus in 1972. JCCC enrolls approximately 15,500 credit students and serves an additional 16,000 individuals in noncredit, continuing education programs, courses, workshops, and other events per semester. The college offers a full range of general education/transfer preparation, career/occupational, and developmental courses as well as a wide array of student and support services to meet the diverse needs of its students.

The impetus for assessment of student learning outcomes at Johnson County Community College has come from several sources. One, of course, is the North Central Association requirement that institutions of higher education prepare and implement a student academic achievement assessment plan. In addition, for some time, JCCC has had a strong interest in and has conducted several pilot projects assessing student cognitive/learning outcomes. For example, the college participated in an early ACT research project involving the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) test. Although the CAAP results indicated that JCCC students performed at or above national averages in several areas, the college was not satisfied with the methodological logistics of CAAP and some members of the faculty had serious reservations regarding the match between some CAAP modules and the JCCC curriculum in those areas. The decision was made, therefore, to investigate more feasible, less intrusive assessment strategies, that would also be more relevant to the general education outcomes identified by JCCC faculty. The results of that process culminated in the assessment strategies detailed below.

In addition, JCCC has a long history of comprehensive institutional research and evaluation and of using data to support planning and programmatic improvement. For example, for several years Johnson County Community College has had in place a comprehensive model to assess institutional effectiveness, several components of which either directly or indirectly evaluate student learning outcomes. They are: career student follow-up surveys conducted one and four years after career program students complete a program (i.e., earn a degree or certificate) or leave with "marketable skills"; an annual employer survey; a transfer follow-up process that includes an annual survey and receipt and analysis of academic data from senior institutions regarding the academic progress of former JCCC students who have transferred; an educational objectives survey of students who leave the institution without graduating, completing a program, or transferring; a course evaluation process (IDEA) in which students' perceptions of their progress on major course learning objectives, as identified by faculty, are collected and analyzed; and a comprehensive analysis, on a semester basis, of grading distributions and patterns, course and program attrition rates, and reasons students drop courses.

Description of the Model

Johnson County Community College's assessment of general education involves collecting and reviewing existing student work produced in courses throughout the curriculum for each of four major outcomes identified in the college catalog: mathematics, communication, culture and ethics, and modes of inquiry and problem solving. This review is conducted by interdisciplinary faculty teams using holistic scoring criteria (rubrics) for each of the stated student academic general education outcomes. The results are reported in the aggregate and may also be analyzed and reported based on several other demographic variables (e.g., credit hours earned, prior courses completed, etc.). Each department addresses assessment results in its annual master planning document. The Dean of Instruction, with support from the college's faculty curriculum committee (the Educational Affairs Committee), is ultimately responsible for ensuring that appropriate curricular changes are made throughout the institution based on assessment results.

Philosophy

The development of JCCC's general education assessment model was initiated in early fall 1992 when the Dean of Instruction asked the faculty curriculum committee (Educational Affairs) to take responsibility for this task. Although the immediate impetus for this request was North Central Criterion Three, from the very beginning of the process the faculty and the dean agreed that outcomes assessment at JCCC would go beyond fulfilling an external mandate. The philosophy of the committee was (and is) that assessment of student outcomes should yield meaningful data from which decisions about curricular improvement can be made. In addition, the committee felt strongly that the purpose of assessment should be evaluation and improvement of the general education curriculum rather than evaluation of individual faculty. With this basic philosophy in place, the task of developing the assessment model was assigned to the General Education/Assessment Subcommittee of the Educational Affairs Committee.

This subcommittee added to this basic philosophy the belief that as many faculty as possible should be included in the assessment development process, either directly or indirectly. Thus, the subcommittee was expanded to include a wider representation of faculty. While a few members have changed throughout the process, the core of the subcommittee has remained intact.

Development of the Model

The development of the model to assess general education was a slow but steady and thorough process. This process proceeded as follows:

- **1992-93 academic year.** The subcommittee spent essentially the entire year studying and discussing assessment. Members read numerous books, journal articles, and NCA publications as well as talked with colleagues from other institutions and attended conferences and workshops. In addition, members reviewed current assessment procedures already in place at JCCC. By the end of the year, a conceptual framework of general education assessment was formulated and distributed to faculty for feedback.
- **1993-94 academic year.** The subcommittee determined that the reference to general education in the college catalog should be the basis for general education outcomes statements since the catalog is the college's formal medium for communication with students (i.e., academic requirements, standards, policies, and procedures). The members divided into four sub-subcommittees, each charged with operationally defining a specific component of the statement. By the end of the first semester, the groups had drafted outcomes statements that were presented to the faculty at large for feedback. This feedback was incorporated into the statements and by April 1994 the subcommittee turned its attention to assessment of these outcomes. Members continued their study of assessment methodologies and concluded that the idea of "performance-based" assessment was in keeping with their stated goal of assessment yielding meaningful data upon which to base curricular improvement. Thus, they began to explore ways to compile collections of existing student work in each of the four areas of general education outcomes. By the end of the semester, the rudiments of this idea were formulated, presented to, and approved by the Educational Affairs Committee. (See Assessment Plan Logistics.)
- **1994-95 academic year.** The subcommittee members spent this time developing holistic scoring criteria (rubrics) and standards for the outcomes. These rubrics and the scoring process were pilot tested on student assignments. The outcomes statements and rubrics were then clarified and revised. The subcommittee as a whole discussed the logistics of implementing the plan (see Assessment Plan Logistics) and proposed a larger pilot project for the 1995-96 academic year. A memo was sent to all teaching faculty asking for volunteers to participate in the pilot. Some forty faculty members responded. An orientation session was held at the end of the spring semester to explain the process and answer any questions.
- **1995-96 academic year.** Institutional pilot test of the model.
- **1996-97 academic year.** Initial implementation of the model.

Preliminary Results

Although accumulation of scored artifacts has proceeded somewhat more slowly than initially anticipated, by late summer 1998 sufficient artifacts had been scored by the Writing and Math scoring teams to permit preliminary analysis. Results of these analyses can be seen in the attached tables. Briefly, results for both outcomes are presented based on all artifacts in the data base (for those two outcomes), on artifacts from students who had earned more than 60 credit hours (equivalent of an associate's degree), and on artifacts from students who had actually earned an associate's degree.

In the case of writing, students who had earned either the equivalent of an associate's degree or the actual degree itself generally met or exceeded the institutional outcome standards set by the faculty assessment committee. The only exception to this conclusion was that a slightly smaller percentage of both groups earned a score of "6" (the highest possible score) than specified in the standard (2.38% and 6.25% respectively, compared to 10% specified in the standard).

For math, neither the students who had earned the equivalent of an associate's degree nor actual degree recipients scored at the levels specified by the institutional outcome standards, as is shown in the math results table.

It is important to remember that these results must be considered tentative, because of the relatively small number of scored artifacts for each student demographic group. However, these findings have been reported to the faculty assessment and educational affairs committees, which plan to discuss them during the spring 1999 semester and initiate a college-wide faculty discussion about these results during the fall 1999 faculty in-service.

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Kathleen A. O'Hara is the former chair of the General Education Assessment Subcommittee at Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, Kans.

Appendix A

General Education Outcomes Assessment
Preliminary Report on Artifact Scoring

Communications: Writing

Standard: Ten percent of the students who have met the requirements for an associate degree at JCCC will earn 6 (excellent) on each of the communication rubrics. Thirty percent of the students who have met the requirements for an associate degree at JCCC will score 5 (very good) or 6 (excellent). Eighty percent will earn scores of 4 (satisfactory) or higher and the top 98% will earn scores of 3 (minimal accomplishment of educational goals) or higher.

Artifacts Scored: 98 total artifacts scored

Correlations: 42 students with more than 60 credit hours

correlation of writing artifact scores with Composition I course grades = .2448 (n = 22) (p = .272)

correlation of writing artifact scores with cumulative GPA = .3232 (n = 42) (p = .037)

	All writing artifacts scored			Artifacts from students with more than 60 credit hours			Artifacts from students who earned an associate degree			Stated outcome standard
Score	#	%	Cum%	#	%	Cum%	#	%	Cum%	% at level
6	3	3.06	3.06	1	2.38	2.38	1	6.25	6.25	10.00
5	22	22.45	25.51	16	38.10	40.48	9	56.25	62.50	30.00
4	41	41.84	67.35	20	47.62	88.10	5	31.25	93.75	80.00
3	23	23.47	90.82	4	9.52	97.62	1	6.25	100.00	98.00
2	9	9.18	100.00	1	2.38	100.00	0	0.00	100.00	
1	0	0.00	100.00	0	0.00	100.00	0	0.00	100.00	
Total	98			42			16			

Mathematics

Standard: At least 75% of all JCCC students earning associate degrees should obtain a score of 4 or more on the mathematics outcome rubric.

At least 95% of all JCCC students earning associate degrees should obtain a score of 3 or more on the mathematics outcome rubric.

Artifacts Scored: 144 total artifacts scored

Correlations: 64 students with more than 60 credit hours

correlation of mathematics artifact scores with grade in highest math course taken (of those required for an associate degree) = .4531 (n = 49) (p = .001)

correlation of mathematics artifact scores with cumulative GPA = .2091 (n = 64) (p = .097)

	All mathematics artifacts scored			Artifacts from students with more than 60 credit hours			Artifacts from students who earned an associate degree			Stated outcome standard
Score	#	%	Cum%	#	%	Cum%	#	%	Cum%	% at level
5	6	4.17	4.17	4	6.25	6.25	1	4.17	4.17	
4	19	13.19	17.36	16	25.00	31.25	11	45.83	50.00	75.00
3	65	45.14	62.50	27	42.19	73.44	8	33.33	83.33	95.00
2	31	21.53	84.03	8	12.50	85.94	1	4.17	87.50	
1	13	9.03	93.06	5	7.81	93.75	2	8.33	95.83	
0	10	6.94	100.00	4	6.25	100.00	1	4.17	100.00	
Total	144			64			24			

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Appendix B

Assessment Plan Logistics

Who scores...	Three to four person interdisciplinary faculty teams score student artifacts using the rubrics developed. These teams are comprised of General Education/ Assessment Subcommittee members.
How scored...	Team members score artifacts individually, with subsequent group meetings (if necessary); however, a team may elect to score as a group.
How many artifacts...	One hundred artifacts per outcome (that is, 100 for Math; 100 for each of the Communications areas: Reading & Writing; 100 for Modes of Inquiry and Problem Solving; and 100 for Culture and Ethics) per year are collected. These are divided into 50 per semester, collected whenever available, usually late in the semester.
When scored...	Fall semester artifacts are scored throughout the spring semester; spring semester artifacts are scored during the subsequent fall semester, and so on.
Who selects courses...	The Office of Institutional Research randomly selects courses from lists associated with each of the outcomes. Ten classes per outcome are targeted each semester.
Who selects artifacts...	Faculty in each targeted class identify an appropriate assignment and collect the corresponding student work. Office of Institutional Research collects that artifact from the entire section, randomly sampling and copying 10 from each class for scoring by the faculty team.
Who collects, copies, distributes, artifacts...	Staff in the Office of Institutional Research.
How results are used...	Upon receiving scored artifacts back from faculty teams, the Office of Institutional Research compiles results and prepares a report to be distributed to faculty. The subcommittee reviews the report and raises issues for faculty to discuss. Action taken by faculty as a result of these discussions is included in the annual departmental master plans. The Dean of Instruction is responsible for ensuring that results of assessment are addressed in departmental and divisional master planning and budgeting processes.
Budget...	Compensation for faculty and staff who score student artifacts requires approximately $15,000 annually. An additional $15,000 was budgeted to provide the required technical support in the Office of Institutional Research.
Assessment of the Assessment Plan...	Toward the end of the spring semester in each academic year, the subcommittee reviews the entire assessment process during a regularly scheduled meeting. The Office of Institutional Research assists in this review, which may involve a survey of faculty regarding the efficacy of the assessment process. Any recommendations are documented in the subcommittee's year-end report.

Chapter 8

NCA

Assessment of Student Academic Achievement

CONNECTING THE DISCONNECTS

104th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
April 10-13, 1999 ◦ Hyatt Regency Chicago

Creating a Context to Support Assessment

Russell O. Peterson

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, both the popular and scholarly literature of higher education has been permeated by discussions of assessment of student academic achievement in order to meet both demands for accountability and the need to improve student learning. For assessment of student learning to accomplish its dual purposes of accountability and improvement, the community college must use the information developed by assessment processes. Despite the importance of this aspect of assessment, the factors that support this critical element of the assessment process have received virtually no discussion in the literature. Throughout the literature, there has been a pervasive assumption that once assessment information was generated it would be used. Such an assumption is not necessarily warranted.

Under pressure from a number of quarters, colleges and universities began the task of designing and implementing assessment systems early in the 1980s. While the assessment of student learning has been invoked with confidence and proclaimed with passion as the solution to the problem of quality in American higher education, it has, in fact, been a complex and frequently contentious phenomenon.

It is true that designing and implementing assessment systems that provide basic data to policy makers for purposes of accountability has proved to be comparatively easy. In some instances, state policy makers have prescribed the outcomes and means of assessment. Such was the case in New Jersey from 1988-1992 and is the current condition in Tennessee and Florida. (Boyer and Ewell, 1988b; Cierezko, 1987; Advisory Committee, 1987; and Banta, 1988) In other states such as Colorado and Virginia, substantial sanctions have been legislated to deal with colleges and universities that do not develop comprehensive assessment systems. In still other instances, such as Illinois, the state mandate has been to assess student learning; but the means have been left to individual campuses and there have been no state penalties. In all instances, administrators and faculty have developed processes to gather and report information to the proper authorities but have frequently gone no further. The design and implementation of assessment systems that develop information that can be used to improve the quality of instruction has proven to be much more difficult than expected. As indicated by a recent publication of the National Center on Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, "Emphasis given to assessment by states, institutions, programmatic and regional accrediting bodies, and faculty themselves has led to an expansion of activity. However, the substantial investment in assessment and in curricular reform has yet to pay large scale benefits in improved teaching and learning." (Ratcliff & Associates, 1995, p.1)

A key to the success of assessment as a means of engendering academic improvement is the ability of the organization to make use of the information developed by assessment processes. Taking the step of using information to effect improvement transforms a partial assessment system into a comprehensive one. Despite the importance of this aspect of assessment, the factors that underlie and support it have received virtually no discussion in the literature. To date, there has been an implicit, pervasive assumption in the literature that information generated through assessment would be rationally analyzed, interpreted, and automatically applied to decisions about organizational change.

In fact, however, such rational analysis and thoughtful application of assessment information for change and improvement has not been part of the process for gathering information and reporting it for accountability purposes. Rather, the processes associated with the use of assessment information for improvement are highly problematic, thus, inviting further study.

The literature on information use in organizations makes abundantly clear that information is gathered for many purposes and frequently is not used within the organization at all. (Feldman and March, 1981; Fincher, 1983) A variety of political constraints frequently cause information not to be used for rational communication and action. Instead, information sometimes may fulfill symbolic rather than actual purposes. Because information gathered through assessment processes is not necessarily used in organizational decision making, a question exists about the conditions that promote the use of assessment information to induce change and foster improvement.

Certainly, some of the literature has begun to examine this issue. (Ewell, 1988; Ewell, 1989b; and Nichols, 1993) Yet, only one paper has analyzed the variables that affect the use of assessment information for improvement in a thorough if preliminary way. (Ewell, 1985c) Much work remains to be done, however, if the factors that facilitate or inhibit the organizational use of assessment information to effect change and improvement are to be understood. Only an enriched understanding of this issue will help faculty and administrators create the conditions that will allow the assessment effort to yield the benefits that are its reason for being.

To help create this enriched understanding, this paper focuses on the question of which environmental and organizational characteristics affect the implementation of comprehensive assessment systems. Further, the paper focuses on the community college because of the traditional community college emphasis on access rather than outcomes, the complexity of community college missions, and the overall lack information about outcomes among community colleges.

To determine the environmental and organizational characteristics that affect the implementation of comprehensive assessment systems, this paper addresses four basic research questions:

1. To what extent have community colleges implemented processes and procedures to gather information about student achievement?
2. To what extent have community colleges begun to use assessment information to meet accountability requirements?
3. To what extent have community colleges begun to use assessment information in making decisions for the purposes of improving academic programs and services to students?
4. What are the environmental and organizational factors that create a context to support the development and use of comprehensive assessment systems?

To answer these questions, the remainder of this paper will describe a historical and social context for the emergence of the assessment movement in the 1980s, provide historical and working definitions of assessment, identify the methodology of the study, analyze and interpret the data, and discuss the implications for faculty and administrators.

Historical and Social Context of Assessment

By the mid-1980s, a variety of social and economic concerns had congealed into an educational reform movement directed first at secondary education and then higher education. (*Nation*, 1983; Bennett, 1984; *Integrity*, 1985; *Time*, 1986) Accountability, a word that was not used in education before 1970, was the purpose of this movement. (Marcus, Leone, & Goldberg, 1983) Quality was its desired objective. And assessment was the means of securing both ends. Without knowing how effectively America's colleges and universities were educating their students, the nation would not be able to redress its educational problems. Assessment of student achievement was the means of explaining effectiveness to citizens and policy makers and the way by which faculty and administrators could begin to return their houses to order.

Economic, political, and social pressures forced educators to reexamine the basic processes of higher education. Economically, the United States found itself engaged in fierce international competition. For the first time since World War II, the nation confronted trade deficits, a huge national debt, and strong competition in the world marketplace for everything from automobiles to computer chips. If quality education had helped win the race to the moon, then a loss of quality must be at least partially responsible for losing the productivity game. Both liberal and conservative analysts reached this conclusion. (Hodgkinson, 1985; Johnston & Packer, 1987; Schlossstein, 1989; and Hornbeck & Salamon, 1991.)

Politically, a conservative administration pushed to standardize curriculum and student achievement by forcing accrediting agencies to require assessment of outcomes as a criterion for continued accreditation. (Nettles, 1987) Federal policy was followed by an ever increasing body of state law that not only strived to support the national effort to enhance international competitiveness but also worked to improve each state's strategic economic position. (Hartle, 1986; Edgerton, 1986; Rossman and El-Khawas, 1987; Nettles, 1987)

Socially, educators themselves became concerned as the perception of declining quality in the face of fifty years of expanded access grew to significant proportions. (*Nation*, 1983; *Integrity*, 1985; *Time*, 1986) When for all of these reasons educators embraced assessment as a means to improve quality, they embraced a new word—but not a unique set of practices and procedures, for evaluating student learning, enumerating aspects of student achievement, and providing evidence of student outcomes had been part and parcel of the fabric of American higher education from its beginnings to more contemporary practice.

While calls for assessment came from many directions, educators found that developing assessment systems was complex and contentious. For community college educators, this complexity was particularly vexing because their institutions were defined by competing and contested goals; a range of frequently paradoxical outcomes; and a focus on resources, access, and other input variables rather than outcomes such as student academic achievement. Indeed, in order to begin to think about the results of their work, community colleges had to attempt to reframe their fundamental reason for being—access. As community colleges grew and flourished during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, access had become the quintessential outcome of the movement—the performance standard by which they were judged. A radical reorientation of this type was vexing and perplexing.

Further, educators found that beyond the macro level of social pressure, various accrediting bodies and state agencies demanded diverse and sometimes contradictory assessment information. Finally, within colleges and universities, there dwelled great apprehension about the real purposes of assessment and resentment that these requirements were being imposed by outsiders. In short, assessment was easy to pronounce but difficult to produce. For educators faced with the task of implementing assessment, it was a continuing enigma.

Particularly vexing was the problem of how to design and implement assessment processes and procedures that would produce information about student achievement that not only would meet external accountability requirements but also could be used internally as a basis for decisions to improve programs and services.

Assessment: The History of a Word

As the many developments in testing, evaluation, action research, research on impact and effect, and program review occurred, none was referred to as assessment. *Assessment*, as the name for activities designed to gather and interpret information about performance, developed elsewhere. The term is derived from the Latin words *ad* and *sedere*, which mean to sit down beside or together. In the 17th century, assessments were made of a person's monetary worth. Implicit in this assessment was "the idea of expert judgment made on the basis of careful observation." (Loacker, Cromwell, & O'Brien, 1986)

Assessment's contemporary usage developed in the field of psychology during the late 1930s because of the work of Henry A. Murry. Focused on determining the skills and knowledge of individuals, assessment as defined by Murry and his colleagues developed a series of tests and other means of evaluating performance and guiding decisions about intervention. (Hartle, 1986) Critical to understanding the linkage to education is the idea that the practitioner must conduct a thorough analysis of a client's existing conditions in order to provide appropriate treatment. According to Peterson and Fishman, "... assessment is the core of disciplined practice. Only by carefully discriminating can appropriate treatments be chosen." (Peterson and Fishman, 1987, p. 3)

As this multi method and multi trait technique, assessment was used first by the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. (Hartle, 1986) During the second world war, the process was also used by the British to determine which rank and file soldiers had the best chance of becoming officers. In order to accomplish this end, the British put each person selected through a series of standardized intelligence tests, five other paper-and-pencil psychological examinations, an interview by a three person team, and a series of standardized performance tests. (Edgerton, 1986; Marchese, 1987)

During the 1960s, assessment moved to business and industry. At such places as AT & T, the assessment center was established to determine the strengths and weaknesses of various employees. According to Thornton and Byham, "An assessment center is a comprehensive, standardized procedure in which multiple assessment techniques such as situational exercises and job simulations...are used to evaluate individual employees for various purposes." (quoted in Harris, 1986, p. 27)

Also during the 1960s, assessment came to education in Ralph Tyler's National Assessment of Educational Progress, a program that is continuing today as large-scale assessments of student achievement are being conducted throughout the nation. (Worthen and Sanders, 1987, p. 15) Today, it has become a standard term in the vocabulary of higher education, applied to groups of students more than to individuals and used for purposes of both improvement and accountability.

A Working Definition of Assessment

In their zeal to promote the various improvement issues related to assessment, advocates have use the term in many, often disparate, ways. As Terenzini has observed, the debate on assessment has frequently been characterized by an "absence of any consensus on precisely what *assessment* means." (1989, p. 646)

First, *assessment* must be distinguished from the related constructs of *measurement* and *evaluation*. Measurement has a more restricted meaning than assessment, as measurement denotes the collection of information about what a student knows about a specific subject or set of subjects. Frequently manifested in testing, measurement answers questions concerning the extent of student knowledge. (Loacker, Cromwell, & O'Brien, 1986; Alexander & Stark, 1986)

Assessment is distinguished from measurement in at least two ways. First, the act of measurement is based on the application of a single instrument at a specific time. The tradition of assessment implies multiple measures and perspectives. (Hartle, 1986) Second, in addition to determining what a student knows, assessment also frequently obtains information about what a student is able to do with this knowledge. (Loacker, Cromwell, & O'Brien, 1986) While assessment's emphasis on how students are able to act on the knowledge they have was a minor theme of the early part of the current move to assess, it has become much more pronounced as knowledge about how students learn has increased. (Ewell, 1991) Measurement is a more narrow construct than assessment. (Payne, 1992)

As a second, related construct, evaluation denotes making judgments about the information that has been collected. While evaluation has been seen as an independent extension of the processes begun by assessment (Alexander and Stark, 1986), the concepts of assessment and evaluation have in fact merged more and more over time; thus today assessment includes both the gathering of information with multiple instruments from various perspectives and the judging or interpreting of that information. (Davis, 1989) In current usage, assessment includes both measurement and evaluation. Assessment as it has been used throughout the 1980s and 1990s also implies the use of the information obtained to make improvements in ongoing programs and processes. (Hartle, 1986; Payne, 1992)

While distinguishing assessment from related terms is one way of specifying its meaning, analyzing it in terms of its purpose, the level at which it takes place, and the content being assessed also contributes to an understanding of the term. (Terenzini, 1989) The question of why assessment occurs is answered by two basic purposes: (1) an interest in accountability to groups removed from teaching-learning processes and (2) improvement of teaching-learning processes. The purpose of accountability is usually defined as summative while the improvement purpose has been defined as formative. (Erwin, 1991, pp. 7-8) While these purposes have traditionally been seen as antithetical, they are more and more being seen as complementary. (Ewell, 1987a; Ewell, 1991a; Ewell, 1991b) The question of who should be assessed identifies several possibilities: faculty, programs, and students. In addition, students may be assessed either as individuals or in groups. (Terenzini, 1989) Finally, the question concerning the content of the assessment reveals a number of outcome taxonomies that delineate economic, cognitive, affective, and behavioral characteristics. (Astin, 1973; Bowen, 1977; Lenning, 1977; Ewell, 1987)

Clearly, in both its historical and contemporary contexts, *assessment* possesses rich and varied meanings. For the purposes of this analysis, *assessment* shall have the following meaning:

1. It is a comprehensive process that includes measurement from a variety of perspectives using a variety of methods.
2. It is focused on students both individually and in groups.
3. It serves purposes of both improvement (formative) and accountability (sumative).
4. It includes a variety of student outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and behaviors.

Methodology

To address these questions, all 325 public, two-year colleges within the boundaries of the North Central Association were invited to participate in the study. From this population, 233 colleges volunteered to participate in the study (72% of the population), and 181 colleges returned the survey (78% of the sample and 56% of the population). The participating colleges are distributed throughout the states under the jurisdiction of the North Central Association as each state included in the North Central Association is represented by the participating institutions. Similarly, the distribution of colleges among the respondents by enrollment category covers all enrollment categories.

From the 181 institutions actually completing the process and returning the completed surveys, 2064 surveys were returned from a total possible return of 2760. The participating colleges returned between 5 and 15 surveys each. As the unit of measurement is the individual, all responses were used in the statistical analysis. The individual responses from each institution reflected the range of administrative and faculty surveyed and the distribution of larger and smaller colleges throughout the North Central Accreditation region.

Assessing Student Academic Achievement

In order to determine the extent to which colleges had implemented comprehensive systems to assess student academic achievement, three aspects of the assessment were identified: total collection, total accountability, and total improvement. Combined, these variables were identified as total assessment. With means of 4.63 for the summary score of Total Collection, 4.28 for Total Accountability, 4.49 for Total Improvement, and 4.47 for Total Assessment—all on a seven point scale—one can see that colleges have begun to develop and implement comprehensive assessment systems, but they have not completed the process. Rather, they are somewhere in the middle.

That colleges find themselves somewhere in the middle of the process of developing a longitudinal assessment system is not surprising. Developing assessment systems is difficult and time consuming work for several reasons. First, the nature of the community college mission is contradictory and complex. It is also oriented toward input rather than output criteria. Second, community college students enter and leave at multiple points. Assessing outcomes is difficult when no single exit point can be identified. Third, assessing student academic achievement calls for an entire reorientation of faculty and administrative staff whose priority is—in the words of Louis Harris (1988)—on design rather than performance. Implementing a longitudinal assessment system calls upon the entire institution to learn a new vocabulary of practice, a new cognitive map of teaching and learning. Given the relatively short time that community colleges in the North Central region have been working on assessment, the level of accomplishment seems appropriate.

As they work to develop comprehensive assessment systems, colleges are using multiple means to assess student learning. In general, the methods used tend to be the more traditional means such as nationally normed exams, performance exams, graduate follow-up surveys, and student interest surveys. Newer methodologies such as classroom research, student portfolios, and outside evaluators are used much less frequently. Thus, colleges appear to have a good start at developing assessment systems but are taking a relatively conservative approach to implementing assessment systems. Faculty and administrators are clearly working to develop systems based on methods they know well and are comfortable with as compared to newer, more experimental methods. Obviously, more work remains to be done. Assessment strategies must be more thoroughly integrated into instructional and evaluation process, and the information acquired through these processes must be used to make decisions about curriculum, pedagogy, and programs.

The assessment methods vary depending upon the specific part of the college's mission that is being assessed. In assessing adult basic education, a nationally normed examination is the most frequently used method as 56.1% of the respondents identified this method. Classroom research and student portfolios were reported respectively by 27.5% and 22.4% of the respondents as methods used to assess student achievement in adult education programs.

To assess student academic achievement in career education programs, 76.6% of the respondents reported that performance examinations were used while 73.2% reported the use of graduate follow up surveys. Student tracking information is used to assess the achievement of students in career programs 58.1% of the time while outside evaluators are used 35.7% of the time.

In general education the preferred assessment method is the nationally normed exam, as 47.1% of the respondents reported its use. In addition, 40.1% of the respondents reported using classroom research as an assessment strategy. Being used much less frequently is the student portfolio, which was reported by 29.9% of the respondents.

For remedial education, colleges are relying primarily on nationally normed exams (54.2%) with classroom research (39.9%), locally developed exit exams (29.8%), and student portfolios (22.6%) being used less frequently.

Finally, in assessing student satisfaction outside the classroom, colleges prefer to use surveys that have been designed by faculty and staff at the college (74.2%) and interviews with students (57.2%). Student focus groups (33.7%) and nationally normed surveys (23.8%) are also used.

Factors that Support Assessment

In addition to determining the extent to which colleges are assessing student academic achievement, this project also investigated the external and internal factors that supported the development and implementation of these assessment systems. Because of the large number of independent items, the first step in the data analysis was to reduce the total number of items to a smaller number of indices. Based on the literature, seven factors were identified: degree of mandate, organizational leadership, resource availability, organizational trust, faculty involvement, information richness, information processes.

First, the study's findings demonstrate that the external degree of mandate variables exert a significant influence on a college's assessment behavior. Based on the study's results, the effect of the North Central Association is less significant than the effect of state mandate and type of state governance. The importance of a state mandate makes sense intuitively. For both those states that have governing authority and those that have coordinating responsibility, colleges are required to file a number of annual reports. This reporting function requires colleges to attend carefully and constantly to state mandates. Thus, state mandate promotes action in ways that cannot be avoided.

While state control exerts a strong influence on community college assessment actions, the second element that comprises the degree of mandate variable, the influence of North Central Association accreditation, is not as significant. The point where the institution is in the accreditation cycle does not influence the existence of a comprehensive assessment system at the colleges. While the North Central Association has exerted significant influence during the last few years for colleges to assess student academic achievement, two reasons could mitigate the influence of accreditation. First, the association has phased in the assessment requirement. Depending on where an institution was in the accreditation cycle, the college had to submit an assessment plan or a plan with results. Thus, accreditation could only be requiring colleges to take the first step, and many faculty and staff at the college could not be aware of the accreditation requirement. Second, the ten year accreditation cycle that most colleges are on blunts the immediate effect of the Association's mandate.

In all likelihood, the effect of the North Central Association mandate will be greater five and ten years from now than it is today, as colleges move from presenting an assessment plan and in some cases demonstrating that some assessment activities have taken place to demonstrating that a longitudinal system is in place; that information is being collected, analyzed, and used in decision making; and that assessment information is being used to effect change.

Second, organizational leadership is defined by 11 specific items that identify ways in which the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Academic Officer, and the Assessment Leader act to support the ongoing assessment of student academic achievement. These actions range from such abstract concepts as "making assessment a priority" and being "steadfast" in support of assessment to the more concrete actions of speaking in support of assessment, urging its support, and providing a budget to support assessment.

Surprisingly, leadership does not emerge from the statistical analysis as a predictor, an outcome that is most perplexing. The literature is unequivocal: leadership, especially executive level leadership, is critical to the success of assessment initiatives. Statistically, however, leadership does not explain a significant amount of the variance of the criterion variables. The most likely explanation is that leadership works in an *a priori* way to create a context for the other more apparent predictor variables, i.e., faculty involvement, organizational trust, and informational processes and richness.

Thus, while the role of leadership in the information processing hypothesis is not confirmed, its importance to the process of implementing a comprehensive assessment system is the infrastructure upon which assessment is built. If community colleges are to advance the work they are currently doing to assess student academic achievement, presidents, vice-presidents, and other campus leaders must make assessment a priority.

Third, resource availability is defined by three items that involve the extent to which the college has applied for and received grants and the extent to which the college has allocated funds for staff development activities that support faculty learning about assessment. While a preponderance of the literature suggests that more available resources will support a greater number of assessment activities, available resources serve as an inverse predictor; thus, it seems to confirm Hedberg's assertion that "it is usually the case that scarcity, conflict, and substandard performances lead to actions, whereas wealth, harmony, and goal accomplishment breed complacency and reinforce current behaviors. Learning is typically triggered by problems." (Hedberg, 1981, p. 16) Resource scarcity rather than resource slack motives assessment activity.

Fourth, organizational trust includes five items that identify either the extent to which administrators believe and support faculty or the extent to which the assessment leader is trusted. The importance of trust supports the idea that the development of comprehensive systems is gradual. Identifying, collecting, interpreting, and using information about student learning in order to improve academic courses, programs, and services is complicated at both the rational and emotional levels. People must rely on one another for extended periods of time. They must believe that the work they do will be taken seriously, they must believe that the information they develop will not be corrupted, and they must be sure that they will not suffer because of the information they develop. Creating and sustaining these conditions is difficult, but such trusting conditions need to exist if assessment is to flourish.

For faculty involvement, the fifth element, 12 items identify either the extent to which faculty are involved in gathering, analyzing, or using assessment and other forms of information or a specific activity in which faculty were engaged in support of assessment. For example, one of the items identifies faculty choosing assessment methods that will provide information that will enable them to improve their courses and services. Other factors identified the percentage of faculty engaged in analyzing organizational information and data, making recommendations for change based on assessment information, experimenting with assessment techniques, and being involved in designing the college's assessment plan.

Faculty involvement is a strong predictor of the existence of a comprehensive assessment system. To involve more faculty, colleges will have to work to introduce newer forms of authentic assessment–student portfolios, classroom assessment, and student focus groups, for example–that engage faculty in gathering, analyzing, and making decisions about assessment information. These techniques will help make faculty more a part of the assessment process.

Sixth, informational richness is made up of ten items that define the concept of informational richness in terms of four characteristics:

1. Information is viewed positively within the organization, i.e., the more that is known about a problem the better chance there will be of solving the problem.

2. The ambiguity of information is accepted, and college staff use trial and error methods to continue to develop interpretations of the information that will lead to acceptable solutions.

3. College faculty and staff gather information about the performance of the college from a variety of external sources.

4. There is internal communication among administrators and faculty.

The final index, informational processes, includes 15 items that identify either ongoing involvement of various college groups in gathering and interpreting information or the existence of structures and procedures for gathering and interpreting information. For example, college governance groups such as the faculty senate, a curriculum committee, and administrative groups are involved in gathering, interpreting, and acting upon information. Also, for example, the college has constructed and communicated broadly about the procedures and precepts for gathering, interpreting, and acting upon information.

Thus, through the data on information use, the research confirms the importance of believing that information can be analyzed, gathering information actively and regularly, using data extensively, having specific rules for interpreting information, and accepting the ambiguity of information. In short, colleges that have a predisposition to view information as a tool for decision making, to accept ambiguity in information, to collect information actively and regularly, and to analyze and interpret information as a basis of decision making are more likely to design and deploy comprehensive assessment systems than colleges that do not view information in these ways.

The literature makes abundantly clear that the assessment of student learning is complex. The literature identifies a large number of variables that appear to play a significant role in enabling the creation and supporting the existence of comprehensive assessment systems. This analysis used many of those variables to propose a model that would help explain the means by which the assessment of student academic achievement is nurtured and nourished. That model explained a significant but still relatively small portion of the variance in the criterion variable (34.5%), the existence of a comprehensive system for assessing student learning.

Determining the reasons that some colleges are able to design and deploy a comprehensive, longitudinal system to assess student academic achievement and to use the information gathered from that system for accountability purposes and for improvement is complex. This study was designed to define and delineate some of those reasons. In the final section of this paper, the findings will be discussed and recommendations will be made for action and further research.

Implications for Action

While state control and the requirements of the North Central Association exist as outside motivators, the other results of this research provide several options to pursue in order to meet state and accreditation requirements to implement comprehensive assessment systems.

First, understanding that leadership is fundamental to achieving success in implementing a comprehensive assessment system should suggest to CEOs, CAOs, assessment leaders, and others involved that they must make assessment a priority. Assessment will not happen on its own. State influence can create a need to make something happen, but without internal leadership the system will not be fully realized. Leaders must make assessment one of their cardinal priorities.

Second, it is critical that organizational leaders recognize that a climate of trust is crucial to the successful use of information. When administrators and faculty trust each other, they will be more willing to take the risks that assessing student academic achievement involves. Granted that creating trust is not easy, it is fundamentally important if leaders want to move forward with assessment that governance structures and institutional processes based on collaboration and cooperation be created and sustained. Trust is derived from people working together in ways that are predictable and mutually supportive. Newer methods of authentic assessment will nurture these relationships.

Third, college leaders must recognize that faculty and other members of the college community must be involved in all aspects of designing, implementing, using, and evaluating the college's assessment system. Individuals believe in and use information they help to create and that they interpret in order to understand and use. This process is not only political but also the cognitive process of creating a shared understanding. While the process of designing and deploying a comprehensive assessment system must have leadership from the highest levels of the organization, it must also have the involvement of those who will have to use the system's processes and the information it creates. As with developing trust, authentic assessment methods such as student portfolios and teacher research can be powerful tools for furthering involvement because they engage faculty and staff most immediately and substantially in the direct interpretation of student learning.

Fourth, the nature of the organization's way of using information influences the college's ability to implement assessment strategies. Thus, institutional leaders would do well to integrate assessment into a total culture of information. Because assessment of student learning is perceived as threatening by faculty who fear that what is learned will be used to evaluate them, placing assessment in a larger context of information use or using a larger context of information use to prepare the way for assessment activities can diffuse some of the threat and help faculty and staff to understand more fully the principles of assessment information. This larger context of information use can include such institutional improvement initiatives as environmental scanning and planning and the use of planning information to make decisions about resource allocations.

Like life itself, there are no guarantees in assessment. No action or set of actions by an assessment leader can ensure successful results. At the same time, several conditions seem to support and nurture assessment of student academic achievement. Establishing the context identified in this paper should help foster sound assessment practice.

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Reaching Toward the Goal of Full Implementation of Assessment in Community Colleges

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Introduction

In November 1996, a North Central Association (NCA) evaluation team visited what was then Estrella Mountain Community College Center (EMCCC) and determined that the college met the requirements and the criteria necessary for affiliation at the associate degree-granting level with the Commission of Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

While it appeared to the team that Estrella Mountain was developing an appropriate assessment model, it was equally clear to the team that the Plan for Institutional Effectiveness (PIE) and Student Academic Achievement Plan (SAAP) were still in the early stages of development and implementation. The team's report stated that "The Student Academic Achievement Plan does not fully articulate a comprehensive assessment of student academic achievement across all areas of the curriculum" (*EMCC NCA Report* 1996).

Since the 1996 NCA visit, the efforts of EMCC's faculty and staff have moved the college beyond the planning stage to the robust implementation of a comprehensive assessment plan for the college.

Faculty and staff agree that the purpose of assessing student learning outcomes is to promote continued excellence in teaching and learning by improving and enhancing student abilities and success, determining achievement of student abilities, measuring the effectiveness of student abilities, and using assessment as a tool for feedback and learning.

This paper provides an overview of the structure of EMCC's Student Academic Assessment Plan, its relationship to Institutional Effectiveness, and the role of faculty and staff in its development and implementation. While assessment was done across the curriculum, only the General Education/Transfer assessment pilot will be highlighted here.

History of the Abilities

Early in the development of the assessment plan, faculty conducted a literature search on assessment and in the process uncovered a six-stage student academic achievement model. After reviewing the model, Estrella Mountain faculty and staff created their own assessment plan that delineates the process to be followed. Estrella Mountain's faculty identified three academic program areas for purposes of assessment: general education/transfer education, developmental education, and workforce development.

Originally, the College sought to assess six abilities: communication, critical thinking, information literacy, team dynamics, personal development, and aesthetic awareness.

Later, faculty determined that at the present time only the abilities of communication and critical thinking would be assessed at the academic program level because of the current small size of Estrella Mountain and the limitations on breadth and depth in some academic programs. Information literacy was subsumed into critical thinking, and team dynamics and personal development were eliminated. Faculty then defined the remaining abilities of critical thinking and communication in objective and measurable terms.

Faculty agreed that during the 2000-01 academic year abilities may be edited, with new abilities being added if so desired. In addition, in June 1998, The Maricopa Community College District's Governing Board revised and added to the district's end statements. EMCC's faculty and staff will play a key role in creating measurable definitions of the district end statements.

The Assessment Efforts

The overall college strategic plan sets the mission, goals, and strategies for the college; identifies institutional priorities; and provides the framework for college-wide and divisional planning. Both student academic achievement and institutional effectiveness are included in the strategic plan as college-wide plans. These assessment efforts are two of the most important parts of the overall continuous improvement component of the model and provide feedback to all campus planning efforts.

The Plan for Institutional Effectiveness asks the question: "Are students and the community getting what they want from the college?" while the Student Academic Achievement Plan asks, "Are students learning?"

Assessing overall institutional effectiveness, how well the college achieves its Mission and Goals, relies primarily on data taken and analyzed from three separate but related assessment areas: Core Indicators of Effectiveness, Student Academic Achievement, and Program Review.

Together, these three efforts provide a comprehensive assessment system to measure overall Institutional Effectiveness at Estrella Mountain with continuous improvement as a key component of each effort.

Student Academic Achievement Plan

The Student Academic Achievement Plan is faculty-driven and is intended to assess student learning at Estrella Mountain. This assessment effort is linked to the first four education related goals of the college and is designed to measure learning in the three primary academic program areas of General Education/Transfer, Developmental Education, and WorkForce Development. In this area, *an academic program is defined as a sequence of courses leading to a degree or certificate.*

Examples of Student Academic Achievement outcomes include attainment of college-wide abilities of critical thinking and communication, academic program competencies, and industry certification.

Faculty-based assessment teams within each identified academic program area identify the cohort of students who will be assessed and identify and/or develop assessment instruments. Faculty teams then determine and implement the assessment process.

Using parameters determined by each assessment team, assessments are scored and analyzed. Faculty discuss the meaning of the data and its relationship to teaching and learning through faculty development dialogues and workshops. Faculty communicate assessment results in a report to SAAC Steering Team and to other appropriate groups beyond the academic programs.

Future faculty orientation meetings, training, faculty development and faculty workshops will reflect application of assessment results to the improvement of teaching and learning. Continuous reviews of the assessment process will be conducted by faculty and improvements to the plan and process will be made to fit the needs of the college and the academic programs.

A Note About Program Review

The Program Review assessment effort focuses on specific programs of the college. It assesses the degree to which an individual program achieves stated goals and objectives. For the purpose of program review, *a program is defined as any related grouping of educational activities, student services, or support functions with designated objectives that* *help the institution to fulfill its vision, mission, and goals.* To assist in creating consistency and decreasing ambiguity, EMCC has developed a Program Review Process flow chart, which describes the basic steps of conducting program review.

The Academic Assessment Structure

Estrella Mountain faculty are the primary members of the Student Academic Achievement Committee (SAAC). The committee's purpose is to determine the number of abilities and to clarify, define, and promote the abilities, facilitating communication between programs regarding assessment efforts. SAAC seeks student input and buy-in to the Estrella Mountain assessment effort and disseminates and limits the use of assessment data based on sub-committee recommendations. Finally, SAAC determines future membership of the SAAC Steering Team and in turn responds to and ratifies recommendations of the SAAC Steering Team.

The role of the SAAC Steering Team includes providing guidance to the assessment effort and the coordination of the implementation of the Student Academic Achievement Model. The team also revises SAAP based upon recommendations from SAAC and facilitates communication among faculty across divisions that will lead to informed decisions about SAAP, addressing issues that have an impact on the overall academic assessment effort. In addition, the SAAC Steering Team communicates the results of the analysis and interpretation of assessments as reported by the assessment teams to college-wide stakeholders and external communities. Finally, the SAAC Steering Team makes recommendations resulting from assessment efforts to Estrella Mountain's Strategic Planning Team and the Budget Development Steering Team. The Director of Institutional Planning and the Curriculum Technician support the work of the Steering Team in exofficio positions.

The SAAC Steering Team membership includes SAAC co-chairs, division chairs, facilitators of assessment teams, a residential faculty representative at large, an adjunct faculty representative at large, and the dean of instruction.

The Student Academic Achievement Committee (SAAC) co-chairs serve two-year terms. This allows a variety of ideas and insights from faculty to be brought to the assessment process through the regular and orderly change of co-chairs.

Implementation of Plan

In January of 1998, the Maricopa Center for Learning and Instruction (MCLI) entered into a partnership with Estrella Mountain faculty and staff to assist with the development and implementation of the academic assessment model. An instructional designer was assigned to work at the Estrella Mountain campus two days per week for the spring 1998 semester to assist faculty with assessment efforts.

During the 1997-98 academic year, a faculty group consulted with the SAAC Steering Team on the development of academic program level assessment at Estrella Mountain for the three existing programs: general education/transfer, developmental education, and workforce development. A timeline was proposed for the implementation of assessment activities for each academic program area. In addition, attention was given to faculty and student views and concerns regarding assessment at the academic program level.

General Education/Transfer

Each member of the General Education/Transfer Assessment Team (GrEAT) reviewed and ranked the assessment tools and eventually selected the Educational Testing Services's *Tasks in Critical Thinking* as the top choice.

The *Tasks in Critical Thinking* instrument was selected because it appeared that the test measured the abilities of critical thinking and communication as defined by the college. The test used categories of social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences, making the Tasks interesting and relevant to students in the General Education/Transfer Academic Programs. Other strengths of the ETS instrument were that it was performance-based, it resembled what students are required to do in the classroom and the world of work, and the instrument could be scored by trained faculty or returned to ETS for scoring.

This performance-based assessment tool required students to read, compile, and analyze data and to write a response. Using the disclosed version of the test, the team then matched the Estrella Mountain abilities to be measured to the tool itself. It was then decided to use the tool for the April 1998 assessment pilot.

In collaboration with the Office of Institutional Planning, the cohort was identified as students who had completed 15-18 hours in the general education core plus three distribution hours. This cohort comprised approximately 130 to 150 individuals.

A major concern of faculty was how to get students to participate in the assessment process. As a result of this concern, faculty representatives met with Estrella Mountain students to learn directly from them what it would take to involve them in assessment efforts. The students were excited to be asked; they saw value in the idea of assessment and provided valuable input as to incentives and the need to schedule assessment for their convenience. In addition, students stressed that the assessment should not be connected to their grades in courses, to their ability to graduate, transfer, or receive a certificate and that it should be anonymous. Additional suggestions on how to get student involvement were sought from faculty at the spring semester faculty orientation meetings through the use of a questionnaire.

GrEAT, other designated faculty, and support staff then developed a marketing approach to alert students to assessment. The approach included the writing of abilities key words on all classroom boards, the ordering and wearing of assessment buttons for faculty and staff which read, "Put Your Abilities on the Line," and placing information about abilities on campus student computer screens as screen savers and on fliers hung in every classroom. When all components of the marketing blitz were identified, all faculty and staff were notified about the marketing efforts.

The Testing Center was selected as the site for the testing. When the arrangements were complete, letters, signed by all general education faculty, were mailed to the 137 students invited to the assessment. Follow-up phone calls were made a few days later to answer student questions and to encourage participation. The assessment was given during Estrella Mountain's Abilities Assessment Week, April 6-10, 1998, in the Testing Center. As incentives to get initial student participation in the assessment process, $20.00 stipends for participating students and a scholarship drawing were arranged.

Forty-two students (30.6% of the 137 identified students) took the assessment. Most spent about 90 to 120 minutes taking the test.

Analysis of General Education/Transfer Results

Faculty scorers were trained by ETS. An in-house analysis of the results was done by a faculty member. Faculty received hourly compensation for their participation in this part of the assessment.

One immediate outcome of the ETS scoring process identified by faculty related to the scoring process itself. A faculty scorer noted that the scoring process confirmed for her that she and her colleagues across disciplines were in fact evaluating students at the same level and with the same high standards. Faculty reported that the scoring process also affirmed for them that the abilities needed to complete the tasks actually reflected students' ability to think critically and to communicate effectively.

The four faculty scorers involved with General Education efforts from the beginning and the two for whom this was their first exposure agreed that the Tasks were not a trivial assessment; they all liked the performance component of the instrument, and they all believed that the assessment was a good reflection of the types of abilities they are trying to help their students develop. From the responses generated by the students, both in terms of depth and breadth, the faculty felt that the students took the assessment seriously.

Analysis of the demographic data collected indicate that those students who chose to take the assessment were representative of the identified cohort.

Preliminary data analysis suggested that the Tasks are appropriate for the student population (i.e., no floor or ceiling effects and a range of scores) and that the Tasks discriminate the degree of development for critical thinking and communication of the students tested. Based on the data analysis, faculty concluded that the *Tasks in Critical Thinking* provided them with the information they were seeking in terms of their students' abilities.

Each Task in the assessment tool had a variable number of questions. During scoring, each question was assigned to one of three categories for analysis: inquiry, analysis, or communication. Inquiry and analysis represent the categories reflecting the critical thinking ability. Each graph compares the percent of answers (not students) at each score. That is, answers are individually assessed rather than individual students. This methodology gives a better reflection of how the student population is doing in each category.

Scoring rubrics were assigned by ETS. The core score represents an answer containing all the basic requirements based on ETS criteria. Answers above the core score included additional correct information. Answers below the core score included less than acceptable amounts of information.

All three curves or categories show a bell curve with the highest number of answers clustered near the core score of "4" which is a minimal answer showing full proficiency. In inquiry, 50% of the answers scored at or above the core score. In Analysis, 52% of the answers scored at or above the core score. In communication, 46% of the answers scored at or above the core score.

This wide bell curve distribution suggests that as additional cohort assessments are done in the future and compared to previous cohort answers that there is an opportunity to see improvement or deterioration of scores; therefore, it can be said that the assessment tool is appropriate for our population and can reflect a broad range of abilities. We have learned that there is "room for improvement" of inquiry, analysis, and communication. Further analysis is not recommended until a larger sample size is obtained.

Using the General Education/Transfer Results

Since some answers of the cohorts assessed scored below the core score, faculty need to implement additional methods designed to improve teaching and learning. Faculty need to see how these methods influence future assessment results. Faculty need to monitor the collection, analysis, interpretation, and distribution of the assessment data for internal and external audiences since raw data and other assessment information may be misleading if proper analytic techniques are not applied to it. Dialogue and workshops on methodology emphasizing critical thinking and communication skills in the classroom should be held at the college and division level. GrEAT set a long term goal of working toward a sample size of 100 students (a minimum of 10 students for each of 10 tasks, etc.). Scorers need to continue to follow closely the ETS procedure for scoring the assessment so as to help to transfer the validity and reliability of this assessment to Estrella Mountain's assessment process. Assessment team members plan to conduct a search for a second measure of critical thinking and communication to satisfy the need for multiple measures of assessment.

Overall Assessment Conclusions

As a result of faculty and staff efforts to respond to the evaluation team's report, Estrella Mountain has progressed in implementation of its assessment model. Senior Administration actively support the assessment program and recognize and reward faculty's efforts to implement it. Results from measuring general education academic programs are being collected and interpreted. Information about assessment is being disseminated to various constituencies. Evidence of specific strategies faculty are using to improve student learning is being gathered and documented. Evidence of specific strategies divisions are using to assist faculty in improving student learning is being gathered and documented. Decisions about changing or refining methodology or measures are being made. Clear feedback loops are being developed to ensure that the results of assessment are used to improve student learning and teaching.

For the 1998-99 academic year and beyond, faculty and staff view the assessment initiative at Estrella Mountain as progressing to ongoing implementation. To reach this level of assessment, goals for the 1998-99 academic year have been developed.

Existing assessment tools will be reviewed and refined. Additional assessment tools to address the need for multiple measures will be reviewed and developed by each assessment team. Assessment results will be applied to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Where appropriate, yearly assessments will be done of critical thinking and communication in General Education, Developmental Education, and Workforce Development. The SAAC Steering Team will work together with academic program level assessment committee chairs to assure that assessment is conducted, data are analyzed, methods of storage and reporting are developed, and that appropriate dialogues and workshops are held to assure the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Faculty and staff will determine the process and model for feedback loops and regular assessment progress reports and annual assessment reports as well as for a yearly assessment report card. Faculty and staff will review the current structure. The process, results, and application of the results to teaching and learning will be documented and stored. Faculty work days prior to the start of each fall and spring semester will include faculty meetings for SAAP updates. More time outside of structured meetings will be used for faculty dialoging of assessment results for the purpose of applying the results of such activities to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Faculty will consider proposed changes based on the discussion of the assessment results that are linked to divisional and/or institutional planning and budgeting processes. As a result of all of these efforts, the entire assessment program and process will be regularly evaluated and refined. Faculty and staff will work to incorporate the Maricopa Community College Governing Board End Statements into the assessment model, providing valuable input to the district's efforts to define and assess these outcomes.

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The Use of Syllabi in Assessment: Unobtrusive Indicators and Tools for Faculty Development

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Introduction

Course syllabi prepared by faculty members for the sections they teach provide powerful, unobtrusive evidence for assessing teaching and learning in an institution, at the institutional and programmatic levels. Generally these syllabi are the most comprehensive descriptions of what students will experience in the classroom, including the subject and topics to be covered, the types of assignments they will be required to complete, and the learning outcomes expected at the conclusion of the course. Systematic content analyses of syllabi may yield powerful indicators about what is actually taking place, or not taking place, in instruction. For example, if the institution espouses the value of teaching students to write across the curriculum, but faculty syllabi fail to include required writing assignments, a disconnect between proclaimed and implemented values is suggested.

Course syllabi are important for reasons beyond assessment. They are the bases for articulation of courses among institutions; in Illinois, for example, a statewide articulation initiative involves faculty panels reviewing course syllabi from more than 100 participating institutions to determine course equivalencies. Syllabi also constitute a form of "contract" between students and teachers that spells out mutual expectations for what will take place in the course. They are models of professionalism and organization for students. Finally, syllabi are critical documents in grade appeals and grievances about such matters as student evaluation, coverage of course material, and student attendance.

The Project

For the past three years we have conducted a multi-part research and professional development project focused on course syllabi. When we began the project we did not anticipate that it would take on so many facets or continue for so long, but at each stage we have identified new research to undertake and new ways to use our findings for professional development, assessment, and the improvement of teaching and learning.

The project has grown to include four components: a syllabus analysis, a student survey, professional development ideas and actions, and a faculty workshop.

☐ Component 1. Syllabus analysis

We conducted a content analysis of course syllabi for 114 fall 1995 courses in social science disciplines. Results formed the basis of departmental discussions in 1996, and faculty were encouraged to look at their syllabi again and to consider revising and improving them. We hypothesized that by the spring 1997 semester social science course syllabi might have been revised to address at least the more obvious ambiguities, contradictions and missing information found in the fall 1995 syllabi. Therefore, we replicated the original study, using spring 1997 syllabi in 135 courses, including all courses in the social science disciplines and in business disciplines as well. Expanding the 1997 analysis to the business disciplines provided us with a proxy control group (faculty had not participated in 1996 discussions) as well as a broader base of courses to assess with respect to expected learning outcomes, types of assignments, and variety of information that could be incorporated into syllabi.

To perform the content analysis we developed a coding sheet, designed like a closed-ended questionnaire. Each of us "answered" the survey for a set of class syllabi. In 1995 the coding sheet proved to be difficult to use, despite our having pretested it individually and together. Typically we found syllabi to be vague or contradictory on points we had presumed would be perfectly clear. For example, we had assumed we could enter a "yes" or "no" to indicate whether the final grade would include consideration of tests, a final examination, written assignments, class participation, etc. We also had assumed we could enter the percentage or weight each element would carry in the final grade calculation.

As a result of the 1995 experience, we revised the coding sheet before using it again in 1997. We gave ourselves more latitude to indicate uncertainty, eliminated "questions" that were not applicable to any of the 1995 syllabi, and more carefully defined what we meant by variables such as writing assignments. Despite our efforts, coding continued to be time consuming and vexing. Each syllabus required 15-20 minutes to code, and the variation across syllabi with respect to clarity, completeness, and variety of assignments and other course information made it very difficult to interpret and codify data in a uniform manner.

In brief, we found that in both 1995 and 1997 most syllabi did contain basic information about the course, including when and where to contact the instructor, the catalog description and course prerequisites, overall learning objectives, the statement of academic honesty, and the topics to be covered. We also found that in both 1995 and 1997 many syllabi did not contain clear information about the amount of reading required, types of tests or other assignments, definitions of class participation, amount of writing required, components of the final grade, weight of each component in the final grade calculation, or dates for tests and assignments. Most syllabi contained some information related to these topics so that a casual-reader scanning the syllabus could assume a syllabus was complete and clear. However, the process of content analysis and coding elements of syllabi onto the "questionnaire" made clear, to us, how ambiguous and incomplete much of the material actually was.

In both years course syllabi provided information about topics and subjects to be covered in the course. Inferences could be drawn about knowledge in the discipline and course that students could reasonably be expected to have acquired if they successfully completed the course. With respect to what are more commonly thought of as general education or workplace skills, syllabi proved less useful. Information about the nature of assignments was sparse; for example, it was difficult to discern whether assignments required group or individual projects, classroom presentations, or the explicit use of critical thinking or problem solving skills. We were unable to draw inferences about whether courses in the social science and business disciplines were designed to promote student learning outcomes with respect to skills such as writing, working in groups, making presentations, or thinking critically.

It is important to note here that absence of information does not mean that students do not learn skills and broad knowledge in a course. However, lack of explicit references in the syllabi are flags to prompt further investigation. The paucity of information in the syllabi also suggests the institution is overlooking a powerful mechanism for ensuring appropriate inclusion of knowledge and skills in courses, and missing the opportunity to emphasize their importance to students.

☐ Component 2. Student survey

After the first content analysis was performed and faculty discussed findings, they asked interesting questions. "What do students want to have on their syllabi?" "What is important to students?"

To answer these questions, we surveyed 464 students enrolled in a sample of courses in the social science disciplines in the spring of 1997. On one side of the questionnaire we listed 20 different items of information that could or should be included on a syllabus and asked students how important each item was to them. On the other side of the questionnaire we asked students whether they found each item on the syllabus for that class. (We let students use their syllabi if they wanted to, but did not ask them to tell us whether they were responding to these items from memory or using the syllabus itself. In retrospect we wish we had asked them this question.)

Ninety-five percent of students said it was very or somewhat important to have information about contacting and seeing the instructor, learning objectives and topics covered, assignments and grading, and attendance policies and critical dates. More than 90% of the students told us they did have information about the first two topics, 80%

said the syllabus contained information about grading, 77% said they knew about attendance from the syllabus, and 49% said they had information about assignments. Overall, we found students reported more specificity and information were on their syllabi than our empirical analysis revealed.

These findings lend themselves to interesting speculations about what might be creating the gap between our data and what students reported. We may have read the syllabi more carefully than students, or lacked supplementary information provided orally or in handouts that would give students more details than were on the syllabus alone. Students might have assumed knowledge about course requirements that they didn't, in fact, have.

An interesting insight was gained into students' attitudes towards the statement about academic integrity that the College requires on all syllabi. The requirement is one approach the institution has taken to emphasizing the importance of integrity and to ensuring that students are informed about institutional policies. For students, the syllabus section on academic integrity was the least valued of any of the 20 items listed on the questionnaire.

☐ Component 3. Professional development ideas and activities

A number of professional development ideas and activities grew out of this project. Some ideas were found on individual faculty syllabi and disseminated to larger numbers of faculty through department and division meetings, required orientation workshops for new and part-time faculty, and written materials. Other ideas were sparked from our own conversations about what we were finding. For illustrative purposes, several ideas and activities are noted below.

- One department devoted a meeting to having faculty members discuss their course syllabi in small groups.
- One of us (Taylor) prepared a sample syllabus with annotations. Using the college's generic course syllabus format, which provides a framework and guidelines for all class syllabi, he added commentaries to each section that gave examples of additional information that could be provided, or clarifying language targeted at those parts we found to be most confusing or ambiguous through our content analyses. The annotated syllabus is now used in new and part-time faculty orientations.
- We prepared a list of "good practices" gleaned from syllabi and distributed them during faculty workshops (described below). One good practice was to give students five "coupons" for late assignments, with each coupon good for turning in an assignment a day late. Thus a student could use all five coupons to turn in one assignment five days late, or use one coupon per assignment to turn in five assignments, each one day late, or any combination of coupons and days late up to a total of five. A second good practice was to provide a grid for students to record and track their course grades, with the grid giving the percent each grade counts in the overall course grade.

☐ Component 4. Faculty workshop

The fourth component of the project was a faculty workshop, conducted for each of the College's four instructional divisions. Our 1999 NCA Annual Meeting presentation consists primarily of a demonstration of part of the workshop. For the purposes of this paper, we provide a brief description of it.

First, we describe the background, methodology, and findings from the two research components of this project, the syllabus content analysis and the student survey. Second, we describe the professional development ideas and activities. Then we turn to the hands-on aspect of the workshop.

We ask participants to divide into small groups, and distribute to them a syllabus for Psychology 101, Introduction to Psychology. The syllabus is actually a compilation of both good and bad examples of what we found during our content analysis. We selected Psychology 101 because it is a mainstream, standard college course that students in a wide range of programs are likely to take either to satisfy general education or major requirements, or because psychology seems to be inherently interesting to many students. Using either a detailed checklist or a brief set of open-ended questions, we ask faculty to work individually or in the small groups to answer questions posed about the syllabus. (The choice of working individually or in groups is dictated in part by the amount of time available). This takes from 30-45 minutes.

Finally, we reconvene as a large group and discuss their responses to the questions, and what they learned about syllabi overall from the exercise. We close with an offer to review individual syllabi if a faculty member wishes to have an outside "analysis."

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Responses to the workshop have been very positive. Among the unexpected values has been faculty recognition that what takes place, often routinely, in one department may be entirely foreign to another department. For example, a number of faculty members in health careers programs were genuinely surprised that not all faculty have their syllabi broken down to the number of minutes devoted to each discrete topic in the course. A number of faculty members in the social sciences were unaware that some departments require standard, departmental examinations. Other benefits of the workshop have been conversations about teaching and learning that took place among full-time and part-time faculty when they participated together in a workshop; insights about their own syllabi gained by long-time faculty members who had begun to take their syllabi for granted, not examining them for months or even years with fresh eyes; and the extent to which "class participation" is poorly defined but still used as part of the course grade.

Conclusion

What began as a small research project to learn more about what we were teaching and telling students in the social sciences expanded into a more extensive research project covering social science and business disciplines as well as student opinions about course syllabi. The project also generated a number of ideas for good practices in teaching, and provided unobtrusive indicators about what was really taking place in the classroom. It spawned a powerful faculty workshop that engaged faculty in conversations about teaching and learning within and across disciplines.

Few faculty receive formal training in preparing syllabi or crafting assignments that enhance learning and student outcomes. Even the best faculty members may rely on syllabi prepared years before, updating time-sensitive information but not taking a fresh look at what the document conveys about teaching and learning expected to take place in that class, or what clues about the instructor and institution the syllabus indirectly provides.

We are convinced that systematic syllabi analyses and complementary professional development workshops are powerful vehicles for improving assessment, teaching, and learning. This belief has been strengthened by the continuing expansion and persistent interest the Oakton syllabus analysis project has generated.

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Connecting Faculty and Administration in the Assessment Enterprise

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Introduction

"Assessment should be faculty driven," has been the mantra within the assessment community for nearly a decade. Its first use undoubtedly reflected the faculty concern that assessment was something about to be imposed on them by administrators; those faculty and administrators who cared about the future success of the assessment enterprise responded by pronouncing on every possible occasion that, in fact, faculty should be the ones "driving" assessment if it were to be integrated into the academic enterprise.

But let's take a look at the definitions and implications of the term "drive." The American Heritage Dictionary offers these definitions: "1. To push, propel, or press onward forcibly; urge forward. 2. To force to work, usually excessively; overtask or overwork. 3. To force or thrust into or from a particular act or state." Only when we come to definition number 9 do we find "To supply the motive force to and cause to function," which is probably closer to the original intention behind the statement. Given such definitions, what are the implications for the discussion and conducting of assessment?

- One implication is that assessment must be something needing forcible propulsion or it won't happen at all. In other words, it has had negative connotations or associations. If assessment is so clearly beneficial, why would anyone have to "drive" it?

- Collegiality is still valued in many colleges and universities; how does one constituency "driving" another figure in a collegial environment?

- Another implication is that if faculty are the propelling agents, administrators have little if any role to play. Yet many academic administrators (especially at the central office level) feel responsible for assuring the existence of a healthy assessment enterprise, knowing that accreditors and/or state or institutional governing boards will hold them accountable for assessment not simply happening, but happening in productive and useful ways.

- And what is the role for administrators in those institutions where faculty are indifferent, if not openly hostile, to any assessment initiative? Additionally, if assessment is "faculty driven," and there is little if any role for administrators, doesn't this lead to a "disconnect" between two constituencies who ought to be collaborating on this important assessment initiative?

- A more recent focus in assessment is the participation of student affairs/student services in assessment activities. How is student affairs assessment to be faculty-driven?

- Finally, there is a disconnect between a "faculty driven" assessment enterprise and the advice from NCA (see, e.g., Cecilia López' *Opportunities for Improvement: Advice from Consultant-Evaluators on Programs to Assess Student Learning,* 1996) that "the committee charged with ongoing responsibility for coordinating assessment is best positioned for success when it is a joint faculty-administration standing committee with campus-wide representation" (p.6).

As we at Western Illinois University (WIU) were constructing a history of assessment at our institution over the last 8 -10 years, we realized that we have been creating a faculty-administrator partnership in the assessment enterprise. And we surmise that this may characterize many other institutions, especially mid- to large-size universities. If this is the case, it may be time to update the rhetoric or the paradigm, since either of these has a profound impact on the way we think and feel about the reality behind the rhetoric or paradigm. The terminology that best captures our experience of a comprehensive assessment plan and cycle is the distinction between **guiding** assessment (administrators) and **deciding** what will be assessed and how (faculty). However, this distinction is not clean; it is fraught with exceptions and oversimplifications. What most matters in the success of the enterprise is the collaboration of individuals with a commitment to assessment that is so passionate it can transcend and overcome whatever skepticism, indifference, or hostility still lurks in the academy.

What follows is a brief and selectively illustrative history of three of the principal developments in assessment on the WIU campus and a delineation of the roles of faculty and administrators in these developments.

Campus Assessment Committee(s)

The first committee, Council on Assessment of Student Learning (CASL), was established by the Faculty Senate (in compliance with the WIU Assessment Plan) in 1992; it was one of several Councils reporting to the Faculty Senate, which deals with undergraduate programs, issues, and policies. This faculty committee was charged with overseeing assessment of baccalaureate level skills and assessment in general education and in the undergraduate majors.

Beginning in fall 1995, the Assistant Provost began meeting regularly with the informally designated "Assessment Six," which included three Faculty Associates for Assessment (one of whom was the Director of the University Writing Exam), the Director of Institutional Research and Planning, and the Chair of the CASL. This faculty-administrator group tracked existing assessment initiatives and identified new directions and initiatives, many of which were referred to CASL for action.

With the expansion of assessment into graduate level studies in 1996-97 and into distance learning in 1997-98, and with the 1996 publication of the NCA document, *Advice from Consultant-Evaluators*, it became clear that we needed to expand the involvement of faculty and administrators. In 1996, the Graduate Council and the Director of Graduate Studies agreed to accept the first level of oversight for assessment at the graduate level.

The "Assessment Six" was expanded (twice) into the "A Team"–first in 1997-98 to add representatives from the Graduate Office (adm.), the College of Business and Technology (faculty), the College of Fine Arts and Communication (faculty), general education (adm.), and teacher education (adm.), and later in 1998-99, to add representatives from the Faculty Senate (faculty) and Student Services (adm.). The A Team, consisting of nearly equal numbers of faculty and administrators, adopts annual goals for the assessment enterprise and generally coordinates the broad scope of assessment activities with their respective constituencies when appropriate. Most of the assessment "work," and "decision making," however, remains with the appropriate committees and departments.

General Education Assessment

The Provost's Office established general education pilot research teams in 1993-94. These research teams were to develop learning outcomes, measurement instruments, and procedures for assessing learning in general education in each of the five areas: humanities, social sciences, natural sciences/mathematics, human well-being, and multicultural/crosscultural education. After the first year, the Provost's office replaced the pilot teams with a one year program of grant-funded CATs (Classroom Assessment Techniques) for 25 faculty. For 1995-96, the Provost's office authorized new Assessment Research Teams (ARTs), selecting faculty Team leaders who in turn selected (often with input from department chairs) representatives from each department offering general education courses in their respective areas. These ART team leaders were responsible for coordinating and leading assessment in their respective areas of general education.

Most ARTs proceeded without undue difficulty, but the *social sciences ART* (SSART) provided some real political challenges. This faculty team developed a 65 item pre-test/post-test instrument to assess student knowledge of social science methodology, in alignment with one of the university's general education goals. Administration of this instrument in 1996-97 resulted in the unsurprising finding that students scored higher when methodology was taught in the social science class. What *was* surprising was learning that methodology was *not* being taught in many social science courses. So the SSART developed a proposal to involve all faculty teaching social science general education courses in the teaching of social science methodology, complete with a document containing suggested material.

At this point, the SSART progress was interrupted (SSART faculty may have experienced it as "derailed") when department chairs–who are administrators at WIU–objected to the content/design of the exam, noting that it too narrowly reflected one discipline. Consultation among the Assistant Provost, the Assessment Office, and the Dean of Arts and Sciences resulted in the decision to give the social sciences department chairs an opportunity to provide input to (or revise?) the assessment instrument. This was a bit frustrating for the faculty who felt they had lost 'ownership,' but we attempted–through the faculty leading the SSART–to help them understand that faculty and administrators share a commitment to assessment; therefore the important thing was to assure the best measurement instrument possible.

Now in 1998-99, the faculty SSART has accepted the revised assessment instrument and is piloting it in social sciences general education classes.

Baccalaureate Level Skills

The University Writing Exam, initiated in Fall 1982, predated the national assessment movement, and it is at the core of the university's baccalaureate level skills assessment. As WIU began in the early 1990s to expand the assessment of student learning beyond our longstanding writing skills and attitudinal assessments, faculty first focused on augmenting the essay-based writing exam with nationally normed, standardized measurements of both writing skills and computation/mathematics skills.

Two ad hoc faculty committees designed a pilot study to explore the use of ACT's CAAP tests as an indicator of "value added" learning in writing and mathematics. The Assistant Provost and the Director of Institutional Research and Planning worked with the Faculty Associate for Assessment to carry out the pilot study. Results convinced the Assistant Provost and the newly created faculty Council on Assessment of Student Learning (CASL) to recommend that the CAAP tests become a university graduation requirement for all students. When the Faculty Senate tabled the recommendation in 1992, the Faculty Associate for Assessment worked with the Assistant Provost to develop and present to the Deans' Council a recommendation to approve the continued CAAP testing for a two year period. The approval was granted, and using data from that testing period, the CASL (with encouragement and support from the Provost's office) then successfully convinced the Faculty Senate in 1996 to adopt CAAP testing as a university graduation requirement for all students. The requirement was approved by the Provost and President. These CAAP tests now have been administered [in both the pilot and permanent stages] along with a locally developed essay writing exam to all rising juniors for seven years.

Summary

It is quite likely that the experience of Western Illinois University parallels that of many other institutions; that is, faculty and administrators have "connected" in a collaborative, complementary relationship as they participate in the planning and implementation of assessment cycles. In larger institutions, especially, administrators may have to assume greater responsibility for guiding the assessment process, while not intruding on faculty responsibility for and participation in the actual assessments and assessment decision-making. Guiding at WIU has consisted in part of the Provost's office (1) requiring annual assessment reports; (2) publishing a compilation of the department and committee reports; and (3) providing feedback to departments and committees about the processes, instruments, or results described in those reports.

Each institution must create the balance of guiding/decision-making–of administrator and faculty roles–that fits its unique governance culture. To the extent that those most responsible for assessment have a passionate commitment to the enterprise and a patience with the process, who is "driving" assessment becomes a moot issue.

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Academic Assessment Issues for People Who Would Rather Not Be Involved In Such Things

Donald J. Lind

Background

This article is intended for those who are responsible, in some way, for maintaining faculty interest and participation in, and good will towards, their college's academic assessment program. Most colleges and universities have at least a few faculty who have to be dragged into this process kicking and screaming. In many cases it is not a matter of opposition on the part of a faculty member but a result of having recently been hired in and not being familiar with how the system works. Since virtually all institutions have been engaged in academic assessment for some time now, problems of these types have had more time to surface and pose threats to what should be a rather smooth, routine operation. These are the challenges confronting department or division chairs, deans of academic affairs, directors of assessment, and, yes, even college presidents.

Rich Man...Poor Man

As with life in general there are the "haves" and the "have-nots" when it comes to colleges and universities. In the north central region of this country as serviced by the NCA-CIHE there are many smaller rural and urban community colleges operating with extremely limited financial resources. The operating budgets of these colleges do not allow for the hiring of one or more full-time assessment experts, nor do they allow for highly sophisticated standardized testing and the consultants needed to assist in this process.

The underlying theme of this paper is that of encouragement. It is to challenge colleges with limited resources to set high goals and to work towards these goals using the expertise, imagination, and creativity of the personnel already present. Excellent results can emerge from simple, well-designed assessment strategies. Sustaining and improving upon these results can come about as a result of motivating existing personnel and training the new hires and adjunct faculty. Most of the obstacles that will be encountered will be insecurity or uncertain attitudes on the part of some of the faculty. Large assessment staffs and ultra-modern technology are impressive but not essential. By focusing in on its faculty and staff a small college can do exciting things. This requires leadership and vision on the part of the administration. When the many and varied talents of the faculty and staff are identified and channeled toward a set of common goals, impressive things start to happen!

Flying Monkeys

Just as Dorothy and her friends were frightened by the "flying monkeys" as they sought their way to the Emerald City, we as educators are not entirely innocent of creating our own flying monkeys. In most cases these are unintentional and occur as a result of a breakdown in communication. Typically these breakdowns occur between those directly in charge of the assessment plan and the faculty and staff designated to carry it out. *The three most frightening "monkeys" are lack of awareness of:*

- the importance of academic assessment,
- the nature of the academic assessment plan in use, and
- the types of contributions faculty and staff can and should make to this process.

Let us take a few moments and examine the three most common types of these creatures. Most faculty do not experience a "revelation" of the importance of measuring the "value-added" component of instructional programs. Someone usually has to point this out to them and reassure them that the extra effort required to accomplish this end is both worthwhile to the institution and extremely beneficial to the student.

The second "monkey," the lack of awareness of the nature of an academic assessment program, is also devastating to the long-term success of the system. Faculty and staff need to be supplied with plenty of easy to read, non-technical information on how assessment systems work. This is particularly true for the system in operation at their institution.

The third and possibly the most crucial "monkey" to eliminate is the one that continually flies about and shrieks at the faculty statements suggesting that they have no meaningful input into the system and that any suggestions they may make concerning changes or improvements will fall on deaf ears.

The "Emerald City" Syndrome

The worst possible scenario for a college to produce is an "Emerald City" syndrome. Remember when Dorothy and her pals finally arrived at the castle in Emerald City to visit with the wizard? Remember how disappointed they were when they got a peek behind the curtain? There are times when faculty members searching intently for answers to questions concerning their institution's assessment plan come to discover that there are a few people "hiding" behind a curtain of bureaucracy cranking out bombastic statements not to be questioned! This "Emerald City" syndrome is nearly always indicative of a lack of faculty ownership of the college's assessment plan.

Eliminating Monkeys and Curtains

To keep a well-designed assessment system going or to jumpstart an ailing one, the key is to keep information flowing and to provide avenues of "meaningful" discussion among all concerned. The faculty's perception of what's happening might not reflect reality. Indeed, an individual's perception of a concept often depends on his/her perspective. For some, their perception of a process is their reality.

It is worthwhile to gauge the differences in perceptions from different groups of people on campus. Full-time faculty may view the academic assessment gains program differently than adjunct faculty. Faculty as a whole may view it differently than administrators. Support personnel may have a view of this process entirely different from the other groups, as so on. It behooves the person in charge to ascertain these various perspectives and to keep as much information flowing as possible.

Finally, the idea of getting people involved and giving them a chance to make suggestions and ask questions concerning the college's academic assessment activities is extremely vital to a successful operation. This is especially so when it comes to those faculty who tend to resist the whole idea of academic assessment. Figure 1 suggests that the most important component of faculty acceptance of their institution's academic assessment plan is "dialog." Dialog, however, is difficult to achieve and maintain unless it is supported by faculty "awareness" of what's going on and genuine overtures on the part of the administration to "participate" in various ways.

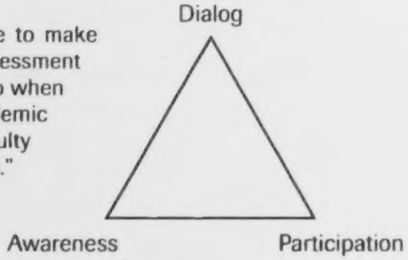

Figure 1

Attacking the Problems

So far we have identified several potential problems with regard to getting more faculty involved and supportive of their college's academic gains assessment program. Coffeyville Community College, a small, rural college in southeast Kansas with a very limited budget and a long history of academic excellence has taken definite steps to increase its faculty's involvement in and support of such activities.

With the establishment of a Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Center, Coffeyville Community College has launched several distinct initiatives:

- **To increase faculty awareness of its academic gains assessment program.** A small, locally produced workbook, "Where Are We? Where Am I," explains in a rather light-hearted yet comprehensive manner the need for academic assessment, how it relates to the college's mission and purposes, and the importance of an effective "feedback loop" component. Exercises at the end of each chapter encourage the faculty to seek answers pertaining to how their assessment plan operates and what effects it has on the daily operation of their institution.

- **To ascertain, as best it can, various views and ideas from differing perspectives.** Using the workbook mentioned above, faculty are encouraged to fill out an evaluation form at the end of each of the five chapters regarding how they "perceive" the assessment operation working within their own institution. This information is returned anonymously with only an indication of job status (full-time faculty, part-time or adjunct faculty, support staff, division or department chairs, and administration). In addition, instructors are asked to identify their teaching area.

  Locally developed software, "Perspectives," is made available to administrators, chairs, and anyone else who might want to analyze the differences in perspectives on the same issues. These reports make excellent documents for committee work assigned to a self-study process. "Perspectives" is written in Access 97 so that virtually anyone with access to Office 97 can learn to run it in a matter of minutes and produce valuable information.

- **To promote meaningful and continuous discussion among faculty, staff, and administration concerning the student assessment process.** Using the "Where Are We? Where Am I" workbook, faculty have as a component of their evaluation form a slot for questions, comments, and suggestions. The "Perspective" software will produce a written report showing all of these personal concerns broken down not only by chapter but also by either (1) question, (2) comment, or (3) suggestion.

  Either the Coordinator of the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Center or a member of the administrative staff will respond to each item using the same software, thereby producing a very professional appearing report that will be distributed to everyone for consideration and further input.

- **To encourage faculty to launch individual classroom initiatives of academic gains assessment.** Another small, locally developed booklet, "A Pocket Guide to Academic Assessment," is made available to those faculty learning to use some form of instructional technology. This booklet, which can fit in a suit jacket pocket or a purse, presents in a simple format easy to read details on how assessment projects may be launched from within their own classrooms. In addition, this document attempts to relate what they are doing back to the divisional, departmental, or institutional level assessment taking place. It is in this manner that student academic gains assessment becomes far more relevant to many instructors.

Conclusion

All colleges and universities are now assessing student academic gains. Some have more resources at their disposal than others. The greatest resource any college has is its own faculty and staff. There will always be those who will resist involvement in assessment-type activities. Increasing faculty and staff awareness of the value of this process and how their local system functions is extremely important. In addition, making every effort to promote ongoing dialog concerning academic assessment activities can greatly improve the odds of convincing many of these "hold-outs" that they can and should play a more active role in this crucial process.

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Living the Assessment Loop

Dana Keating
Catherine Packard

Over a period of years, assessment at Southeastern Illinois College has become embedded in the daily processes, activities, and operations of our small, rural community college. This has occurred through the development of a structured, yet flexible and evolving model for assessment, a plan for its implementation, and continued use of results. The model from which we now work is dynamic and could be readily adapted to other colleges regardless of size, demographics, or financial resources.

Assessment at Southeastern did not happen in some miraculous way, nor did it happen overnight. However, it did happen, and we are now "Living the Assessment Loop." The key components in this loop are Program Review, Assessment, Strategic Planning, and Budgeting. While implementation of assessment is the focus of the information that follows, to provide context, this paper includes a brief description of Southeastern Illinois College and an account of how assessment developed into an institution-wide process. Implementation strategies and staff development activities are shared, concluding with an update of our current status in terms of assessment, evaluation, and uses of that information for institutional improvement. Finally, we explore the pitfalls and the highlights of our experiences in "Living the Assessment Loop." While we do not claim to have discovered the perfect model for assessment and the use of results for institutional improvement, the model or parts of it could be adapted to other circumstances and institutions.

Description

Southeastern Illinois College is a public, two-year comprehensive community college with traditional community college offerings. It is an open-door institution with a district population of 60,000, which is the smallest in the state. It has an annual enrollment of 4,000 full and part-time students. The average age of our students is 29+ years old. Southeastern Illinois College is a 140 acre campus in rural, southern Illinois. We are five miles east of Harrisburg, Illinois, 135 miles southeast of St. Louis, Missouri, and 333 miles south of Chicago.

Development of Assessment at Southeastern

The development of our assessment plan was an evolutionary process with its origin going as far back as 1985. However, it formally began when our former Vice President for Instruction formed a Committee on Assessment in the fall of 1992. The committee consisted of staff from the technology division, staff from various academic divisions, and several administrators; the vice president for instruction served as the committee chairperson. Initially, the first year, the group worked to revise the college mission statement to address the changing needs of the district and to define major goals and objectives of the college in a more suitable and measurable format. The next two years, the committee met many times in long work sessions to formulate a plan. To make a long, long, long story short, the plan was approved by the Board of Trustees and sent to North Central. The committee celebrated when word was received that North Central had approved the plan. While one large task–plan development– had been completed, we soon realized the greater work was yet to be done–implementation.

Organization and Plan of Action

While faculty had been involved in the development, they had not yet really taken ownership or truly invested themselves in the concept. This had to be the next step before we could go forward. We first set up an assessment office to give assessment a home and a real presence on campus. We attended a workshop where we learned of the

5-column model, which was developed by Dr. James O. Nichols and Dr. Eliot Elfner from Institutional Effectiveness Associates. This 5-column model has since become one of the cornerstones of our assessment process. After sharing the model with the committee, we adopted it and developed plans to share it with the entire institution. A time line was also developed to bring every area of the college into the process. Additionally, a general education committee was formed with a faculty member as chairperson. Leadership of the assessment committee changed with the Director of Institutional Research and a full-time faculty member named as co-chairpersons. We firmed up program review time lines for the entire institution. And we made budgeting, program review, and annual strategic planning a continual process with assessment results a driving force behind institutional planning and decision making. We thought this plan was a realistic, cohesive plan of action, one that would be reasonable and do-able.

Once this work was done within the committee, we made plans for a staff development day to kick-off institution-wide implementation. We presented our plan to the entire college during our 1997 fall professional development day. We understood how easily we could alienate college personnel if we did not tread lightly. We also realized that if the faculty and staff did not have true "ownership" of their assessment strategies and the decisions that came from their assessment results, our carefully planned implementation strategy for the college would be perceived as overwhelming and be completely unsuccessful. We knew we did not want to regress to the assessment stone age from which we thought we had evolved. It became more and more obvious to us that in order to do assessment, we had to live assessment. And we knew that in order to live assessment, everyone at the college had to become invested in the process.

Implementation

The major focus is, of course, implementation. It is one thing to say we are going to do something, but it is a different thing entirely to actually make it happen. Our assessment loop begins with Program Review, which flows to Assessment, then to Strategic Planning, and finally Budgeting, which then starts the process all over again. Program Review, which occurs in the spring at Southeastern, results in a number of recommendations being made for programs. While in and of itself Program Review is a valuable assessment activity, it can and should lead to further related assessment. Therefore, when division chairpersons or program directors are given their program review results, they are also given their 5-column model forms to develop their assessment plans. While not all entities of the college are involved in Program Review, they are all included in assessment. The institutional time line that was developed schedules all areas of the college and keeps us on track and accountable for our progress.

As previously mentioned, the cornerstone to the entire process has been the adoption of the 5-column model. It standardizes and documents the processes of assessment throughout every area of the college. An illustration of this model follows.

The 5-Column Model

Assessment Model for Southeastern Illinois College
Your Program

Mission Statement: Southeastern, as a comprehensive community college and a member of the Illinois Community College System of higher education, is committed to a philosophy that believes in the dignity and worth of each individual regardless of race, creed, gender, physical abilities, national or ethnic origin. As its mission, Southeastern strives to become the educational and cultural center of the community by providing for the development of intellectual, social, personal, and productive skills to all persons who reside within Community College District #533.

Institutional Goal	Departmental/Program Intended Outcomes/ Objectives	Assessment Criteria & Procedures	Assessment Results	Use Of Results & Budget
What do we do here at Southeastern? Who are we? WHY ARE WE HERE?	WHAT do we WANT to happen?	HOW are we going TO DO it?	HOW DID we do?	SO WHAT?

This format is to be used:

1. To complete a component of the Five Year Assessment
2. To complete the Program Review Follow Up from the previous year's Program Review.
3. To assist with the Strategic Planning and Budgeting

Please turn in the completed assessment plan by December 1 to the Assessment Committee.

Note: This form has been reproduced and modified with the permission from James O. Nichols and Associates, 1999

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This assessment process leads naturally to and from Strategic Planning. Assessment activities identified through the use of the 5-column model are included in the Strategic Plans of the programs and divisions. Intended outcomes noted in the model fit naturally as goals in the Strategic Plan and vice versa. As division chairpersons and program directors work through their Strategic Plans with their faculty and staff, assessment activities naturally flow into those plans and processes.

Strategic planning and assessment should then flow naturally into the budgeting process. To make the connection seamless, two things were done: (1) a budgeting component was added to the 5-column model, and (2) a form was developed that tied budget planning to assessment activities and results. This new form was attached to all budget development information that was distributed by the business office. This information was used by budget developers to justify budget requests and was submitted to the vice presidents for review and action. It also assisted the vice presidents in their decision making processes in budget allocations.

A reporting cycle was developed to pull together this huge amount of data and information, put it in some meaningful format, and then disseminate it for review and use. In general, data flows from faculty to division chairpersons to the vice presidents. The Vice President for Instruction then produces the annual assessment report, which is funneled down the same route to reach faculty for their use and improvement of their programs.

We have found that documentation is important to close the loop and to start the next cycle. We have been told that "closing the loop" is the most common citation by visiting teams. Simply put, "closing the loop" is taking the information that is found and using it. A common problem that institutions face is that oceans of data are collected but no actions are taken. However, at Southeastern, results are used as the "change agent," that is our evidence that something is happening as a result of assessment efforts. Closing the loop completes the process to prepare for the next cycle. Therefore, motivation is created by having a record of change and improvement. In revisiting "The Assessment Loop," the entire process is continuous; not one component stands alone. They are all connected.

Since the presentation to the entire staff in 1997, we have put the past data in the standardized format and have completed two assessment cycles in some cases. Some areas are just getting started, while others are on their second cycle through the 5-column model. The point is that we are all involved, even though we are at different stages in terms of processing through the columns, uses of results, and decisions based on the results.

Staff Development

Staff development has been an important, ongoing component of assessment. In addition to the original staff development day whereby we presented the model and the continuous assessment process, we met specifically with the Corrections faculty, administrators, and staff to help them develop their ongoing cycles of assessment and usage of the results. We surveyed the assessment instruments that were currently being used in our Corrections division and assisted them in implementing the 5-column model. We presented the model to the instructional services staff in a small group session, adapting objectives to specific assessment strategies and activities that their various offices could use. A newsletter has been published regularly since the fall of 1997. The newsletter highlights assessment activities in progress throughout the college, as well as providing assessment techniques and other information. Members of our assessment committee have met with division chairpersons and divisions to plan and develop assessment instruments and strategies. They help to analyze existing data, as well as help with the completion of the 5-column model.

Current Status

Some actual changes that have occurred since the adoption of the model have been in the areas of general education, developmental education, student affairs, nursing, and the social science division. Some offices have been moved. The student satisfaction survey has been fine-tuned and changes have been made in its distribution to broaden the sample. We have fine-tuned the testing schedule in the Learning Lab. Registration of students has become an ongoing process. More high school visitations have been made. We are developing and delivering more and more distance learning and on-line courses. We have consolidated a number of student support services. We have developed a student-orientation video. We have made changes in our scheduling of courses on and off campus. Many office responsibilities have been streamlined. Our data entry and retrieval system have been improved. Clearer lines of communication throughout the college have been adopted. Job descriptions have been made clearer. The *Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency* (CAAP) testing and results are discussed at almost every assessment meeting. We are in the process of considering using our own instrument instead of a commercial one. Personal interviews are conducted with all of the administrative staff, program directors, division chairpersons, and student organization directors. The information from these interviews is included in the yearly reports and is a good way to keep lines of communication open throughout the college. The interviews have been a good supplement to the results from the other assessment data; they will continue to be conducted.

Recommendations

We have learned about and lived through experience by experience. These experiences have resulted in a list of do's and don'ts that may be helpful for other institutions who may be at a roadblock along the assessment journey. Although there are many variables that have contributed to the life of assessment on our campus, there are four variables that we found to be the most important in a successful program: administrative support, standardization of the process throughout the college, shared responsibility throughout the college, and ownership of the process and use of the results.

Conclusion

Assessment lives at Southeastern because we believe that it is not an end in itself, but a necessary basis upon which improvement can be made. Assessment is just part of a larger plan. It helps us find out how well do we do what we do and how we could we do it better. Ultimately, **students** are the ones to benefit by improved services in our offices, improved educational programs, and better support services.

In our college documents we have an explanation of assessment and evaluation that is a summary of our beliefs:

> *Evaluation and Assessment of students, programs, and all aspects of Southeastern Illinois College are important to us for many reasons. First, a solid system of assessing ourselves and what we do is like designing a good map. The questions are, "How do we know we have arrived at our destination if we don't have a good map to guide us along the way?" "How do we know we have accomplished what we set out to do if we don't have a clear idea of our end goals?" Also, educational institutions are mandated by state and federal government to focus on evaluation and assessment. Assessment is like an ongoing report card that involves everyone. The entire process requires us to ask questions about performance and outcomes, to seek answers to these questions to create positive changes at Southeastern. Most importantly, however, is the impact our assessment data may have in transforming our college from a good one to a GREAT one!*

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Using Electronic Portfolios to Assess Institutional Effectiveness: Practice and Promise

Gloria M. Rogers
Julia M. Williams

Introduction

In the spring of 1996, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology began an Institute-wide process to develop a comprehensive assessment plan. The strategies used in the development of the plan were discussed in a paper and presented at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (Rogers and Williams 1998). The purpose of this paper is to report progress made since the development of an electronic portfolio process to document and assess student outcomes. Lessons learned and recommendations for those interested in developing an electronic portfolio process are also given.

Why Electronic Portfolios?

While the decision to use portfolios did not distinguish us from other schools, the decision to create and use an electronic portfolio focused on specific, desired student outcomes, did represent a significant departure. Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology has a ubiquitous computing environment with every undergraduate student having an Institute-selected laptop computer and common software suite. All residence halls, fraternity houses, library, Student Union, and most classrooms are wired for network access. The Rose-Hulman Commission on the Assessment of Student Outcomes (CASO) planning team reasoned that the use of electronic portfolios (RosE-Portfolios) would greatly reduce the storage and access disadvantages of a conventional portfolio system and provide students an opportunity to document their learning in a multi-media format that was familiar to them. The RosE-Portfolios were also believed to be an efficient and cost-effective method to collect and access student materials and reduce the number of disadvantages to the portfolio assessment process (Prus and Johnson 1984). Although Rose-Hulman may be viewed as being unique in access to computing support, we believe that most higher education institutions provide students with computing access that would support an electronic portfolio system similar to that developed at Rose-Hulman.

RosE-Portfolio Design

The RosE-Portfolio was designed and developed by Rose-Hulman faculty, staff, and students. The design was driven by how the portfolio was to be used by both faculty and students. CASO members identified the following primary RosE-Portfolio design requirements:

- ○ Ease of use
- ○ Student-controlled access (other than faculty raters and advisers)
- ○ Ability to archive student material in multi-media format
- ○ User access of the RosE-Portfolio using multiple search criteria
- ○ Students' ability to update and replace materials

- User access of the RosE-Portfolio online, anytime
- Faculty ability to rate student portfolios online, anytime
- Faculty ratings automatically logged and aggregated
- Faculty raters' ability to provide students with feedback online
- Student submissions focused on Institute-defined learning outcomes
- Submissions archived in a "portable," easily accessible format

Once the design specifications were identified, a prototype of the RosE-Portfolio was developed for evaluation.

The RosE-Portfolio is designed as a web-based system allowing students to access their RosE-Portfolios using their local area network usernames and passwords. The database currently being used is Oracle. It provides all the archiving and search functions necessary to meet the design specifications. The design includes a compression feature that automatically compresses documents when students submit them in their RosE-Portfolios. This minimizes data storage space needs. The design also allows for eventuality of providing each student with their electronic portfolios on a CD-ROM when they graduate.

In addition to the features identified for student use, special views have been developed for raters and faculty advisers. They will be allowed to search using multiple search criteria designed to satisfy their need for information. Faculty raters will be able to search by learning outcome goal and performance criteria. For the purpose of rating submissions, students will not be identified by name, but the submission will be assigned a number. This will enable the faculty raters to be more objective about the student work they will evaluate. Faculty advisers will have access only to the work of their advisees. They can search by outcome goal for all advisees or on any subset of performance criteria. They can also review the entire portfolio for any given advisee. Other features include the ability to search by date of submission and quarter in which the document was created. This will enable the adviser to quickly determine whether or not the advisee is keeping his or her RosE-Portfolio current.

RosE-Portfolio Pilot Project

Before implementing the RosE-Portfolio system for all incoming students we wanted to evaluate the system to determine the following:

- Ease of use for students and faculty
- Clarity of outcome goals and performance criteria
- Ability of students to document their progress toward achieving Institute learning outcomes
- Clarity of instructions for use of system by students and faculty
- Student attitudes toward use of the system
- Robustness of electronic infrastructure to handle multiple formats
- Faculty comfort with holistic scoring of student submissions
- Ability of faculty raters to apply the rubrics developed for the rating of submissions
- Faculty and student confidence that implementation of the RosE-Portfolio process would provide the Institute with information to improve educational programs

In the spring of 1998, thirty paid student volunteers representing a cross-section of the sophomore class—major, grade point average, gender, race—were selected to participate in the pilot study. They were asked to submit their current best work that they felt demonstrated their progress toward achieving the specific performance criteria under each sub-goal. In addition, each student was asked to write a reflective statement that explained why he or she believed the submission met the particular performance criteria. The materials students submitted were of their own choosing from among all of their Rose-Hulman experiences. The material could have been from specific course work, co-curricular activities, or "other" experience (e.g., co-op or internship experience, foreign travel). Because faculty raters were rating student submissions based on a standard developed for graduating seniors, it was important to emphasize that the pilot study students were expected to select work that best demonstrated their *progress* toward achieving the learning outcome goal.

Students were given ten weeks to complete the project; then they participated in an extensive assessment of the pilot project experience that included both written questionnaires and focus groups. During this period of time, they submitted more than 130 files to the RosE-Portfolio system.

Results of the Evaluation of the Pilot Project

The student volunteers reported that they, generally, found it easy to deposit documents in the RosE-Portfolio system. They found the instructions to be clear and the student learning outcomes easy to understand. They felt that writing the reflective statements indicating why they thought the submission was appropriate for the desired learning outcome were valuable but were by far the most difficult part of the submission process. More than 50% of the students considered submitting evidence of learning outcomes that were a result of activities outside the classroom. As sophomores, these students reported that they thought the most difficult objectives they would have to document by the time they were graduating seniors were the ones related to ethical and professional responsibility and an understanding of how contemporary issues shape and are shaped by mathematics, science, and engineering. Students were optimistic that the use of the RosE-Portfolio process would provide Rose-Hulman with information that would help to improve programs. More than 50% of the sophomores participating in the pilot project indicated that they would like to continue to use the RosE-Portfolio to document their learning outcomes.

Results from Faculty Rating

In June 1998, a faculty group of six evaluators spent two days reviewing and rating the materials submitted by students. The team of faculty was made up of two faculty members from the humanities, two from science, and two from engineering. Written materials had been developed for the raters that explained the concept of holistic scoring and the use of rubrics to rate student work. The primary purpose of the two-day session was to determine the clarity of the written materials and instructions for faculty raters and the ease of holistic scoring and applying the assessment rubrics. We were also interested in finding out whether or not the faculty raters believed that the use of the RosE-Portfolio would produce the type of information from students that would help us to evaluate and improve our programs.

The faculty reported ease of inter-rater reliability and the use of holistic scoring. They also found that some of the performance criteria were not clearly written and some criteria were too complex with more than one performance expected per criterion. Faculty proposed rewording of some of the criteria for clarity. Examining student submissions was found to be generally instructive in regards to a wide range of student abilities. There was a general concern about the inability of students to develop well-written reflective statements and recommendations were made that the student instructions should emphasize what a "reflective statement" is and the importance of self-reflection.

Lessons Learned

During the development process, there were several lessons that were learned by the CASO members. These lessons were primarily in the areas of allocation of resources, continuous development, and institutionalization.

- **Allocation of resources.** Assessment is not free! The members of CASO spent many hours discussing, presenting, and developing the Institute assessment process. Although the RosE-Portfolio system was developed in-house without external funding, there was a tacit commitment of resources to this project that took people from other Institute tasks. Since the development of the prototype, external funds have been received to assist in the refinement and assessment of the RosE-Portfolio system. Anyone considering establishing a comprehensive assessment process must determine the source of resources required.
- **Continuous process.** Assessment is a continuous process, from the first stage of identifying the goals of the institution to the final stages of collecting data and feeding the information back for improvement. Faculty and staff may demand that the team charged with developing the process "get it right the first time," with no changes or alterations. The development of the process must be iterative, and there must be plans in place to support process development over time. The principles of assessment should also be applied to assessment process development; making assessment checks all along the development cycle can show where improvements need to be made. Ongoing review and improvement of the assessment plan under development are crucial to overall success.
- **Institutionalization.** The process of institutionalizing an assessment system is one of the most difficult aspects of implementation. Change is hard and takes time. It is important to recognize that engaging faculty

and others in this process is no guarantee that there will be broad-based support for the assessment process. Be prepared to meet resistance if the assessment process engages faculty in any meaningful way (e.g., perceived workload, work style, etc.). Find out where the points of resistance may be early on in the development process. Address each one of them as quickly and openly as possible. Administrative support is no guarantee that the process will work as designed if faculty are not "on board."

Recommendations

☐ **Potential development**

Because the RosE-Portfolio can be accessed at any time from anywhere, the potential of involving our National Board of Advisors, Alumni, and other constituent groups in the rating of portfolios is very real. The establishment of inter-rater reliability could be done by bringing all raters together on campus for a half-day session or it could be done in small groups using video conferencing. Once rater reliability was established, RosE-Portfolios could be viewed and rated from anywhere in the world where one could access the Web. The value of the input of our external constituents on the quality of student work would provide a perspective that is not now currently available.

☐ **Designing your own system**

Portfolios, whether conventional or electronic, may not be the answer for every school or every program. The decision to design an electronic portfolio system, however, will be driven by how you answer the following questions:

◇ *What is the primary purpose of the data collection?* Portfolios can be used to assess individual students or programs. Portfolios can be used to assess the growth of a student over time or take a "showcase" approach where students are told to submit material that represents their "best" work. Instead of assessing individual students, portfolios of students can be sampled using valid sampling techniques to determine whether or not program or institutional student outcomes are being met. If a showcase approach is to be taken, snapshots of an electronic portfolio can be taken over time to document or benchmark student progress.

◇ *What strategies are you going to use to assess the material submitted in the portfolios?* Keeping in mind the early admonition that portfolios are not an end in themselves, it is necessary to have a clear plan on how the material is going to be categorized and assessed in a meaningful, focused way that is relevant to your desired student outcomes. Because of the potential time commitment to evaluate portfolios for a number of outcomes, a clear plan needs to be developed on the nature of the rubrics to be used and the ease of access and rating of portfolios. It is important to think ahead of what an assessment report might contain including the results of portfolio assessment. If you are planning to use portfolios for program assessment the answers to following questions will guide the development of the process:

○ *Are you going to assess everything in **every** student's portfolio?* The answer to this question will determine the type of feedback process that is built into the system. If the program has a small number of students it may be desirable to assess every portfolio. However, for a large program it may not be practical or possible to assess every portfolio. If that is the case, consideration should be given to developing a mechanism to sample part of every student's portfolio. This would require a sampling technique to select a part of every student's portfolio over time. This method would ensure that every student would have at least part of his or her portfolio rated by faculty. This is a feature that can be built into the e-portfolio design. In this example the primary purpose of the portfolio is to assess "programs" and not individual students. However, the design of a well-constructed portfolio process would enable faculty to assess individual student skills and knowledge as well.

○ *Are you going to assess **every** goal and performance criteria **every** year/semester?* If you have eleven student outcomes that you are going to measure and each of these has an average of six performance criteria, that is the potential of 66 submissions per student. If you have 100 students in your program, this is 6,600 assessment data points. Common sense would dictate that you must develop a plan to assess the portfolios that is based on sound sampling methodology. Sample your portfolios for potential problem areas (i.e., which of the performance outcomes appear to be the most problematic for students?) and develop your assessment schedule to maximize your ability to identify areas for improvement early in the process. Yes, all outcomes should be assessed with the same rigor but the results of that assessment will differ. When evidence indicates that students are having difficulty demonstrating a desired outcome at the appropriate level, improvements can be made in the processes designed to promote the outcome and new assessments made. Outcomes targeted for improvement can be assessed more frequently than the outcomes that students consistently meet. The design of an electronic portfolio system can automate the search and sampling process.

Summary

The decision to use portfolios to document and assess student outcomes needs to be made in the context of the purpose of assessment, how the results of the analysis are going to be used and resources available. Portfolios are recognized as contributing important longitudinal and "qualitative" data in a more natural way. The use of electronic portfolios reduces the disadvantages of conventional portfolio systems in that it is more efficient in terms of storage and organization. It also allows raters an opportunity to rate student portfolios from anywhere at anytime. Because of the searching and archiving functions, data from the rating of student portfolios can be presented in a multitude of ways to meet institutional needs. For a demonstration of the RosE-Portfolio, readers can get online at http://www.rose-hulman.edu/ira/reps.

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A Case Study of the Evolutionary Process of Planting and Nurturing an Integrated Electronic Portfolio Assessment Process at the University of Wisconsin-Superior

Albert M. Katz
Bradley Gangnon

This case study will focus on the political and social process of establishing an integrated assessment program at the University of Wisconsin-Superior (UWS), a four-year comprehensive institution, and report on that program's ongoing evolution.

The *first section* of this case study covers, quite briefly, the planting and rooting of Phase I of a highly successful integrated assessment system that is rather conventional in its components. This phase of our assessment program ran from 1985 through 1998 and continues as the basis of Phase II.

The *second section* of this case study covers Phase II of our assessment program, which involves our current plans to incorporate all of Phase I into an innovative project using electronic portfolios to

- organize the total liberal arts experience of students into an easily manageable and portable form (most commonly a disk) that each student will own and take with her/him at graduation;
- take advantage of the electronic linkages used in the creation of the portfolios to integrate those portfolios with earlier assessment data to create a fully integrated UWS Assessment Data Bank that will facilitate the ongoing improvement of instruction and student support services.

Phase I. Planting the Root Stock

In 1985, the University of Wisconsin-Superior had just finished an unsuccessful *second attempt* at reforming a "pork-barrel" distribution approach to General Education. The immediate benefits to each department of the existing system had overcome all arguments on the merits of focused reform. In an attempt to gather enough evidence to change the faculty's minds, the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA) and Katz undertook to establish an assessment program.

Katz (senior author) is a professor in the Department of Communicating Arts, with a specialty in the management of conflict. It was that perspective that led the VCAA to ask Katz first to chair the Assessment Committee and then to take on the role of Coordinator of Assessment. Katz spent more than a year creating a partnership of faculty, staff, and students to study the need for an assessment program, and then to design it and put it in place.

By making each constituency in the university a partner in the design, and by taking the pains to relieve anxieties and to build consensus, the Assessment Committee put together a program that passed through the governance structures of the university without a single dissenting vote, and went into effect in 1987.

We began by utilizing the ACT-COMP exam to assess our General Education program. By 1989, ACT-COMP data on both our graduating seniors and on our incoming freshmen students revealed that our students were placing well below national averages both in comprehension and in the content of basic general education material. In addition, the value-added growth from the beginning to the end of the general education program was disappointing. These results sufficiently horrified the faculty that we had their attention and were able to construct and pass a significantly different and focused General Education program. Subsequent COMP data from students who had passed through the new program validated our changes, in that scores went up from nine to 12 percentage points, over several years, and have maintained the higher levels to this day.

The new General Education program included a "Capstone Experience" to be designed by each major program. The capstone was intended to synthesize the student's learning in the major with the student's general education. These experiences have included senior seminars, internships, performance projects, and individual library and/or laboratory research papers. These capstone projects have turned out to be some of the most valuable assessment instruments that the departments can use to review their individual curricula. In most instances, capstone projects have demonstrated successful ability to put into practice key aspects of departmental curricula. However, in some instances, the projects have pointed up tenuous comprehension and ability to apply key concepts, and have therefore led to revisions in both delivery and content.

In their initial attempts at discipline-specific assessment, most departments turned to nationally normed examinations such as the ETS-MFAT and the CPA exam. There were some departments that used experiential assessment from the beginning, such as teacher education programs, which combined portfolio and student teaching, and fine arts programs, which combined portfolio and performance assessment. Gradually, almost all programs began to rely on the capstone activities, in addition to tests.

In 1992, NCA sent an accreditation team to the University of Wisconsin-Superior for our ten-year review. Their report indicated that the UWS Assessment Program was one of our greatest strengths and an admirable model for others to consider.

A brief history of this phase of our assessment program can be found in Albert M. Katz "Helping a Campus in Transition," in *Making a Difference: Outcomes of a Decade of Assessment in Higher Education*, Eds Banta & Associates, [Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1993] pp. 54-65.

Phase II. The Introduction of Electronic Portfolios

In the fall of 1997, our assessment program was operating smoothly. We had made a number of changes, both in General Education and in individual programs, that were guided by the nationally normed tests. However, we had begun to recognize that nationally normed testing was a "blunt instrument" that could no longer provide the subtlety and sophistication of information that we needed to guide ongoing curricular improvement. The capstone courses were providing some additional help, but most members of the community were seeking for more personally designed input.

We had been talking for several years about the personal tailoring that portfolio development provides for each university program's unique qualities. We recognized the same advantage that portfolio development afforded the assessment of each individual student. From both perspectives, however, the sheer logistics of assembling, organizing, storing, and manipulating the data were intimidating. Faculty and students alike shuddered at the contemplation of cartons of material, for *each* student, cluttering up offices and dorm rooms.

In 1997, as Gangnon (second author) joined our assessment team as a Graduate Assistant, we began to explore the notion of the electronic portfolio. By utilizing the standard facilities of our academic computing services, including Microsoft Office and the Excel Spreadsheet, we sought to design a means by which we could organize, store, edit, and manipulate the contents of a student's entire liberal education [major, minor, general education, external, and co-curricular activities] in one account on the server. In most instances, the student could have her/his own personal copy of the portfolio recorded on some combination of 3.5 inch disks, zip disks, and/or CDS. More advanced components involving digital cameras, digital scanning of graphics, and the digitalization of music, and other performance documentation, etc., raised issues of capacity for storage (disk and current server space) more than concerns about the ready availability of software to manage these tasks.

The project is beginning with General Education as its first component. A proposal to fund training and needed upgrades in our technical capacities to fully implement the plan is part of the University of Wisconsin System budget submitted to the Wisconsin Legislature for the coming biennium. The other elements will be added as resources and faculty interest make them appropriate.

As envisioned, the data collected in the portfolios can collectively provide a base for guiding the faculty and support services in the continual improvement of their work. What is more, we will be able to link the data from the portfolios with our earlier data from surveys and from testing outcomes in ways that will provide each department with longitudinal, multi-dimensional views of its curriculum, and the effectiveness of its presentation.

The second phase of our assessment program is underway now and involves the politics and the computer architecture of electronic portfolios. We are dealing with the same process of involving constituencies and building consensus for this phase that marked the initial work on our campus in 1985.

In our presentation we will discuss:

A. The computer design and how it works

B. Funding concerns and solutions

C. Faculty Issues

- ○ What are they expected to do?
- ○ What do they get out of it?
- ○ Why is it worth their effort?

D. Student Issues

- ○ What are they expected to do?
- ○ What do they get out of it?
- ○ Why is it worth their effort?

We presented a first view of this project at the Annual Assessment Forum of AAHE in Cincinnati this past June 1998. The presentation was very well received and we were asked to bring the participants up to date on the newest developments at the Assessment Conference in Indianapolis in November 1998. We are pleased to share the latest chapters in this ongoing fiscal, social, political and academic adventure with your participants.

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Assessment Made Easy:
Using Embedded Projects/Cases

Tracey Hawkins
Sue M. Trakas
Debra R. Way

Like many institutions, Clermont College, a two-year branch of the University of Cincinnati, began an assessment initiative as a result of the NCA Assessment mandate. Early into the movement, a model was adopted that had been introduced by Jim Nichols. Under this model, all programs developed outcomes and criteria in order to assess their graduates. It was at this point that assessment stalled at Clermont in large part due to several administrative personnel changes. No effort was put forth to develop tools in order to measure the outcomes that had been developed. With the appointment of a new Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and the NCA visit looming, the assessment movement at Clermont College was revitalized.

A $500 summer stipend opportunity was offered to faculty in order to develop the tools necessary to further the assessment plan. Faculty submitted proposals and five faculty were selected to begin their assessment development. These faculty shared their plans with colleagues and the assessment plan swung into high gear. Most faculty decided to use capstone course, surveys, or embedded projects as their tools.

The focus of this paper is to discuss the use of embedded projects. It will illustrate how projects that were originally designed for grading purposes can be combined with a set of rubrics or competencies and then quickly scanned for assessment purposes. This becomes painless for the instructor as well as transparent to the student. It will also illustrate how embedded projects have been used for assessment in the Business Department of Clermont College. The corresponding changes that have occurred as a result of the assessment findings will also be shown. Here you will see three examples of embedded projects from three different disciplines within the Business Department.

The Accounting Technology Program currently has five intended student outcomes that include technical competence in a variety of accounting areas and the ability to inform users of financial information through written communications. These outcomes also include the ability of the students to obtain a job in the field of accounting and the overall positive satisfaction of the employers of our graduates.

One specific tool used in the program is a writing assignment that combines the computation of different accounting choices, such as FIFO versus LIFO inventory methods, along with the communication about these choices to the users of financial information. The communication is in the form of written answers that should be concise and logical.

This tool has been used in Principles of Accounting III for the past two years. The overall assessment of this tool was adequate. The students were able to complete the computational answers with consistent accuracy. However, the writing portions of the assignment were not particularly good. Many students did not answer the questions, but simply rehashed the facts. Some answers were lengthy and not concise. Other answers appeared to be phrases or sentences taken directly from the book. Most answers were handwritten and not very neat. Overall, the written answers did not show any original thought or demonstrate any critical thinking skills or professionalism.

As a result of this second year of assessment, changes were made in the Accounting Technology Program. Curricular changes included, for example, the addition of Business Communications and Word Processing as required courses. Additionally, accounting faculty agreed to require more writing and critical thinking assignments in *all* accounting classes. A workshop is being planned to train accounting faculty in the design and use of writing and critical thinking assignments in the classroom. Hopefully these changes and the continued assessment of the program will lead to lasting improvements in accounting technology students.

The next example is from the Business Management Technology Program. This program has five intended student outcomes that include demonstration of critical thinking and analytical competencies, employability, and student satisfaction with curricular content and preparation received in relation to their career choice. Graduate surveys were used to measure student satisfaction with program content and preparation received in relation to individual career choice as well the student's employability in business or government.

Student critical thinking and analytical skills were evaluated using embedded course exercises or cases that required students to appropriately analyze and synthesize the data for business decision making. Exercises/Cases were used in the following courses: Survey of Statistics, Financial Decision-Making, Principles of Management, Organizational Behavior, Business Ethics, and Quality Management Tools II. Rubrics were established for each embedded exercise/case and students were required to demonstrate a minimum of 70% accuracy.

In the Quality Management Tools II course, fifteen application scenarios were included on the final exam. Students were required to recognize and apply the appropriate quality management tool in each business situation. Each student was required to answer correctly eleven of the fifteen scenarios on the exam to meet the 70% accuracy rating.

Results of the first year assessment showed that five of the thirteen students in the sample demonstrated 70% or greater accuracy in applying the quality management tools. It was unclear from the method used in the assessment whether the problem involved recognition of the tool and its appropriate use or the ability to analyze the scenario and apply the proper tool.

Consequently, for the second year, modifications were made to the method used and the frequency with which the measurement was taken. Recognition of the tool and its proper use was measured separate from application, to better determine where more emphasis was needed in the learning activities. Scenarios were also developed and used in the Quality Tools I course, to determine whether difficulties occurred in the beginning sequence and were carried forward into the next course in the sequence.

The second year course assessment findings, after the modifications were implemented, indicate a need for more student-centered learning activities that involve critical analysis of business decision making data in order to improve their application skills. An effort is being made to use more collaborative learning exercises in order to enhance student competencies in critical thinking.

The last example comes from an Administrative Support program. It was decided that, coupled with surveys, students would be assessed in two different courses, both taken in the sophomore year. In addition to establishing rubrics, a set of competencies would also be developed. These rubrics and competencies would serve as the basis for the assessment of the embedded projects.

The first outcome using an embedded project utilized an office simulation packet. The outcome required 80% competency in the application of office procedures. The competencies demonstrated that application. After the packets had been graded, the finished product was compared to the list of competencies. Tick marks beside the competencies were used to indicate that the work met that competency. At the conclusion, results were tallied to see if, indeed, 80% of the student met the competency requirement. As a result of the findings, several curricular changes were made in the program. These changes included adding material to courses, developing more student-centered learning activities, and requiring more decision-making activities in all program courses.

Another outcome required the students to demonstrate proficiency in basic office skills. This outcome was measured by embedded projects in two different courses utilizing established rubrics. Typing speed and accuracy were measured in a sophomore level word processing course and a working knowledge of software application was assessed in a final project used in another class. These findings led to the establishment of a minimum level of typing speed in order to pass the final typing course. A remedial course was developed to assist students who did not meet this standard. A new course was developed in order to meet a perceived need with presentation techniques. Again, more decision-making activities were developed in all program courses.

Not only were changes made to the curriculum. Also, resources were needed in order to accomplish some of the activities. As a result of these findings, money was requested for skillbuilding software. This request was granted mainly as a result of the assessment findings.

All programs used the standard reporting format shown here to summarize the results of their program assessment.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT XYZ Program June 30, 1998	
Outcome 1	Example—Graduates of the XYZ Program will be able to analyze a tax statement and report the results to a client.
Criteria/Methods	Example—Given a completed 1040 tax return, the student will be able to analyze the outcome of the return and complete an analysis of the return in a narrative that a client will understand. This will be a project in ABC course.
Performance Evaluation	This would include the actual format of the project along with the rubrics used in assessing the quality of the work.
Assessment Findings/ Interpretations/ Conclusions	This section would record the findings after conducting the actual assessment. Trends or other information would be recorded and an interpretation of the results would be given. Any conclusions would be drawn at this time.
The following three sections would be completed for the program as a whole.	
Plan for Academic Modification	This would detail any changes that would be made in the future as a result of the assessment findings. These changes could be in particular courses or in the program curriculum. It could also be a change in teaching method.
Plan for Assessment Modification	This would include any changes in the assessment method/outcomes that the faculty deemed necessary.
Resources Needed	This section would describe any resources (monetary, clerical, etc.) that the faculty needs in order to accomplish the modifications listed above.

These individual program assessment results were combined to generate the college's annual assessment report. This report is disseminated from the Academic Affairs Office through the communication/feedback loop, which includes external and internal stakeholders.

The information would be used to assist the external community, such as community advisory boards, accrediting agencies, and employers, in making informed decisions. Internally faculty and administrators would use the information to improve quality and make informed decisions within the institution. These decisions could include curriculum reform, continued academic improvement in teaching and learning, and information for institutional recruitment and academic advising including the corresponding budgetary impact.

The changes/modifications implemented are then evaluated during the next round of assessment activities. The intention of this process is to generate an ongoing effort for continuous quality improvement.

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Marian Achievement Day: A Multidimensional Assessment of Institutional Academic Outcomes in One Day

Gary J. Boelhower

Marian College was unsuccessful in attracting students to Saturday assessment sessions even with the offer of T-shirts and gift certificates to the campus bookstore. The Academic Outcomes Assessment Task Force decided that an avenue for creating excitement for and an expectation of participation in assessment needed to be devised. The institution wished to create a campus culture that included participation in assessment as an interesting and expected annual activity. In response to these reflections, the College created Marian Achievement Day.

Marian Achievement Day is announced on the annual calendar of events. All faculty are requested to list it in their syllabi even if their course is not scheduled to meet on Achievement Day. A personal letter is sent to all day-program students explaining that they are required to participate in Achievement Day and giving them the time and place of the activity for which they are scheduled. Freshmen students participate in a program that includes an overview of the College mission and values, with an emphasis on the importance of service in the community and the achievement of academic outcomes for job preparedness and life enhancement. Freshmen find that the panel of recent graduates who speak about the impact their Marian education has had on their life is the high point of the program. From the perspective of faculty and administration, it is wonderful to have alumni "sell" the liberal arts core requirements and extra-curricular service opportunities to the first-year students. The first-year students also hear from a panel of service organization representatives who share stories of how previous Marian students have influenced the lives of the clients they serve. These students also complete a Freshman Satisfaction Survey that provides the College with important information about students' key concerns. The experience also gives students another opportunity to get to know some of their fellow classmates, as well as members of the faculty and staff.

Sophomores take the ACT Comp, a nationally normed instrument, as well as two instruments created by the College: (1) The Academic Quoin (Quality Opportunity Index) and (2) an Advising Survey that measures student satisfaction with the advising they have received. The Student Academic Quoin measures student perception of the importance of each of the institutional academic outcomes and their perception of their achievement of these outcomes. The scoring of the Quoin instrument includes an "importance" score, an "achievement" score, and a score of the difference between perceived importance and perceived achievement. This difference indicates academic outcomes that may need attention. A significant difference between importance and achievement may mean that greater or lesser emphasis might be place on the particular academic goal. The Student Academic Quoin and the ACT Comp are used at the end of the Sophomore year since students complete a large proportion of their general studies by this time in their college experience.

Students at the Junior level participate in an activity that is not specifically related to assessment but helps them make connections between their Marian experience and their career goals. Students tour schools, hospitals, insurance companies, industries, businesses, etc. related to their interests and majors. During and after the tour, representatives from the organizations speak about the talents, skills, and competencies that they require of job applicants at various levels. Preparations for these visits among the organization representatives and Marian staff provide an opportunity to talk about Marian's academic outcomes in relation to employer needs.

Seniors are randomly divided into groups to participate in a number of different assessment activities that aim to provide multidimensional evidence of their level of achievement of academic outcomes. Instruments used include (1) the ACT Comp, (2) the Student Academic Quoin, (3) Written Communication Assessment through an essay, (4) Small Group Interaction/ Oral Communication Assessment through group activity and presentation, and (5) Visual/Musical/Literary Arts Assessment. Specific questions or sections of each of these instruments are related to particular academic goals. The written communication assessment is a tool for ascertaining not only writing skills but also the achievement of goals related to critical thinking, valuing, the identification of social injustice, decision making, the application of ethical principles, reflection on spiritual aspects of self and others, etc. Similarly, the small group interaction and oral communication assessment is used to assess interaction skills and oral communication skills as well as the practice of active compassion, decision making, collaboration, leadership, etc.

Problems encountered in the first two years of Marian Achievement Day activities can be summarized as follows: (1) the need to clarify in-house assessment instruments; (2) communication, reminders, and more communication to faculty and students alike; (3) the need for forms that can be scanned and easily formatted into understandable data sets; (4) adequate administrative support for the planning, implementation, and follow-up.

The Academic Outcomes Assessment Task Force continues to reflect on the experience of Marian Achievement Day and to strengthen its various dimensions. Perhaps, the most critical key to its success is buy-in from the college community, especially the faculty. Students need to be reminded at the beginning of the semester and throughout the semester that the assessment day activities are very important for the institution. Through their participation, students can make Marian College and its programs better for future students. Another major factor in the success of Achievement Day has been faculty and administrative support in the planning and implementation of the various activities. Achievement Day is a community event with divisional chairpersons and program directors along with faculty and staff taking leadership roles. For each Marian Achievement Day, six committees of faculty, staff, and students work on each of the major dimensions of the day: the Freshman experience; the Sophomore experience; the Junior experience; and three committees on the Senior experience, including Written Communication Assessment, Small Group Interaction/Oral Communication Assessment, and Visual/Musical/Literary Arts Assessment. The many faculty who participate in the assessment activities are joined by community assessors who come from the Board of Trustees and various advisory committees. Another factor that cannot be overlooked is the well-defined set of institutional academic outcomes for undergraduate education (see Appendix A) that gave Marian a strong direction for the assessment program. It was clear from the outset that an assessment of values as well as competencies and content was important.

Additional assessment instruments, beyond those administered on Marian Achievement Day, are used to obtain the perception of the importance and achievement of academic outcomes by alumni and employers. Each year, alumni who have graduated three years ago are asked to fill out an abbreviated Alumni Quoin. They are also asked to give an Employer Quoin to their supervisor. These instruments are significantly abbreviated versions of the Student Academic Quoin.

The data that have been collected from the 1997 and 1998 Marian Achievement Days is analyzed by the Academic Outcomes Assessment Task Force and provides a baseline against which to measure improvement or decline. Academic divisions will reflect on the results in relation to the general studies and major courses that they offer. The assessment results are also being used by the General Studies Task Force in their reflection on the skills and competencies that Marian graduates will need in the twenty-first century.

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Appendix

Marian College Undergraduate Academic Outcomes

Undergraduate students will:

I. Recognize the spiritual dimension of persons and construct a personal philosophy and professional ethic based on this recognition.
  A. Identify significant theological and philosophical approaches to being and reality.
  B. Understand the meaning of values.
  C. Identify social injustice.
  D. Practice active compassion.
  E. Make decisions using moral and ethical criteria.
  F. Apply ethical principles to their chosen fields.
  G. Reflect on the spiritual aspects of self and others.

II. Think critically.
  A. Construct questions and answer them through analysis, synthesis, organization, and evaluation of information.
  B. Use intuition and affective skills in decision making.

III. Communicate effectively.
  A. Speak and write clearly and coherently using the conventions and standards appropriate to the mode of discourse.
  B. Receive oral, written, and non-verbal communication effectively through listening, reading, and observing.

IV. Reason quantitatively.
  A. Apply basic principles of mathematics.
  B. Perform mathematical calculations.
  C. Interpret numerical presentations of data.

V. Understand various methods of inquiry and the tools and resources available in the many disciplines.
  A. Identify the heuristic structure of the various disciplines.
  B. Use library resources effectively.
  C. Use computers effectively in their major discipline.
  D. Apply principles of research in their major discipline.
  E. Recognize the importance of life-long learning.

VI. Understand biological and physical systems.
  A. Identify the basic principles of biology, chemistry, and physics and their application to society.
  B. Comprehend the interrelationship between humanity and the natural environment.

VII. Appreciate the diversity and commonality of both eastern and western cultures within the interdependent global community.
  A. Value significant elements of the Judaeo-Christian tradition.
  B. Identify the breadth of human cultural experience.
  C. Develop a sense of historical perspective.
  D. Value the variety of cultural identity in U. S. society.
  E. Analyze the relationship between domestic practices in their discipline and those in other parts of the world.
  F. Demonstrate experience with a foreign language.

VIII. Analyze the interrelationships among human beings and their social environments.
  A. Analyze social forces that affect human relationships.
  B. Analyze psychological forces that affect human relationships.
  C. Use the principles of collaboration and leadership.

IX. Understand the elements and methods of the arts.
  A. Explain the basic principles of artistic expression in literary, musical, and visual arts.
  B. Develop a capacity to enjoy and respond to the arts.

X. Achieve baccalaureate competence in a major field through the integration and application of knowledge and skills from the various disciplines.

Implementing a Culture of Assessment: The Early Steps

Norval C. Kneten

Introduction

Many faculty in the academy believe implicitly what Robert Bellah (1999) recently stated explicitly. "I oppose the whole notion of outcome assessment, not only in the university but even in kindergarten, because it denies the essentially creative and unpredictable nature of the learning experience." This position is taken reflectively by some faculty and defensively by others.

Five months after implementing the self-study at Nebraska Wesleyan University, an informal faculty discussion responded to this quote with a resounding, "Amen." This was followed, however, by a thoughtful discussion of what could and what should be assessed. It was a discussion that would have been unlikely five months earlier.

Many institutions have "assessment of student learning" plans in place for some of their programs and are searching for means to move to implementation in which an institutional assessment culture is present (López, 1998). The purpose of this paper is to present an outline of such a process.

Prerequisites

Following are prerequisites that institutions must typically achieve in order to begin moving toward implementation of assessment.

- **Senior administration support.** There must be senior administrative support for the assessment of student learning in order to achieve inculturation of assessment. If this support is absent, efforts must be made to tie assessment to the highest priorities of these administrators. These priorities may include strategic planning, improvement of teaching, accountability, resource allocation, and others. In each of these, a case can readily be made that assessment of student learning is crucial in achieving those priorities. The references at the end of this paper provide a strong starting point for developing those rationales.
- **Continued accreditation recognition.** The fact that the institution will be formally applying for continued accreditation and will be undergoing a self-study in preparation for that review must be highlighted and reinforced whenever possible. Faculty who remember the last self-study must be educated to the fact that past self-studies, however successful, were most probably descriptive and that the upcoming self-study must be evaluative, a far different prospect.
- **Peer driven.** Recognition must be encouraged among the faculty and other constituencies of the institution that the accreditation review is a peer review process. Through the NCA-CIHE, peers have established the processes for accreditation review, have determined the elements of that review, and will make up the team that visits the campus.
- **Timeline realities.** If the evaluation visit is less than two years away, reference to the sample timeline in the NCA *Handbook* (p. 137) will lend a sense of urgency to this process. If the next evaluation visit is further away than two years, a case can be made that early preparation for the self-study offers significant advantages. Since assessment of student learning is in most cases the most difficult area to demonstrate in the self-study,

a more measured and less intensive effort is more likely to be sustained after the visit, thereby demonstrating the inculturation of assessment. The timeline for the self-study and the evaluation visit should be kept clearly before the faculty.

◇ **Recognition and reward provided.** Faculty engaged in the assessment of student academic achievement should receive recognition and support from senior administration. In particular, faculty engaged in assessment of general education should be provided the necessary time and resources to carry out that assessment and be rewarded for accomplishing incremental goals. Chairs and directors of academic programs should see direct benefit to their areas for completing assessment plans and implementing them. Each institution should carefully consider how best to provide recognition and reward within its particular circumstances.

Criterion Three

The *Handbook* (p. 64) lists five criteria for accreditation: mission and goals, resources, student academic achievement, planning, and integrity. Of these, the third criterion is the only one requiring assessment of student learning. Academic programs are expected to have measured their students' academic achievement and documented improvement in their programs.

The third criterion, student academic achievement, asks a number of questions: (1) What does the faculty expect of students? (2) Are students meeting those expectations? (3) What is the gap between expectations and student performance? (4) How can student academic achievement be improved?

Advice from peers should guide all assessment of student learning efforts (López, 1996).

Engaging the Faculty: Definitions

Assuming that the above listed prerequisites have been met, faculty should be prepared to begin following the advice of their peers in implementing assessment. The first step is to achieve a common vocabulary.

Each discipline in the academy has a vocabulary specific to its needs. To begin conversations across discipline lines about the details of assessment without a common understanding of shared words such as goal, purpose, and objective is to invite early confusion and frustration.

Faculty will inevitably bring to these conversations a history and commitment to their own understanding of use and application. A good faith effort in convincing faculty to accept for purposes of assessment a common set of definitions will go a long way to promoting civil discourse and useful results.

The following definitions are being used in Nebraska Wesleyan assessment activities (López, 1996). It is important to note that these definitions are not unique and that others may be adopted in different venues at the university.

- Goals: general aims that are broadly stated and long-range in character
- Purposes: omitted
- Objectives: brief, clear statements describing desired outcomes; specific measurable performance emphasized (a cluster of objectives should fully describe the goal)
- Outcomes: actual achieved results or consequences
- Methods: sequence of steps, or process, followed in order to collect data
- Measurements: specific data collection instruments used with a sample of subjects or observations
- Direct measures: measurements providing specific results that clearly address an objective
- Indirect measures: measurements that supplement direct measures providing information that enriches and illuminates
- Non-measures: measurements or data that do not provide significant information on the objective

Engaging the Faculty: Domains of Learning

One of the first steps for faculty in the assessment of student academic achievement is to identify objectives for their academic programs in each of three domains of learning: knowledge acquisition or cognitive learning, skill acquisition or behavioral learning, and attitudinal development or affective learning. In each of these three domains, faculty must become aware of what their peers consider to be acceptable measures and which are unacceptable.

López (1996) reviews these in detail. For example, standardized pre- and post-examinations and departmental comprehensive examinations are acceptable measures of cognitive learning. Unacceptable measures would include completion of coursework records, course examination scores and external program review by advisory bodies.

In the domain of behavioral learning actual performance in public speaking and interpersonal communication skills join pre- and post-measures as acceptable. In the domain of affective learning the most common method is the use of surveys of students, alumni, employers, etc. Other methods not yet well defined are being encouraged for development.

Engaging the Faculty: Mid-Journey

At this stage, the number of objectives to cover curricular objectives fully frequently becomes overwhelming. Recall that "a cluster of objectives should fully describe the goal." Consider the difficulties in defining the "cluster" required to fully describe a goal such as "appreciation for being fully human." Many well-intentioned goals become burdensome when clusters of objectives are identified. And frequently, changing or modifying these carefully crafted goals would engage the full involvement of the faculty governance system, beginning a long and arduous deliberation.

Comprehensive assessment of the multiplicity of academic requirements can seem to require whole new faculties and platoons of staff. This is one of the most difficult stages in the assessment development process. Resources allocated appear completely inadequate and the task seems hopelessly out of control.

At this point, establishing program priorities is critical. Objectives must be selected that sample across a goal defining its general outline, its primary attributes, and its primary deficiencies. This runs counter to disciplinary indoctrination where a thesis is narrowed and comprehensively examined.

Faculty should be encouraged to establish their highest programmatic priorities, to examine those first, and to redesign their assessment measures in the light of those initial results. Creative and critical selectivity becomes an essential skill during this phase. Identifying means to encourage this selectivity is even more essential.

Engaging the Faculty: An Outline

A simple outline for the assessment of student learning has been provided by our peers (López, 1996) that gives strong guidance in developing an assessment process.

- Formulate a goal
- Determine a set of measurable objectives
- Make multiple measurements of outcomes
- Determine gaps between objectives and outcomes
- Determine probable reasons for those gaps
- Make adjustments to narrow gaps
- Recommend changes for planning and budgeting processes
- Correlate adjustments to changes in outcomes
- Continue refining

This outline provides an opportunity for evaluation of the assessment plans for academic programs. A report back to the chairs and directors of academic programs that clearly specifies how their plan meets each of the outline's elements is essential. It should be as detailed as giving guidance on what elements should be reviewed and possibly revised by their unit, what elements may be missing or incomplete, and what specifics may not be contributing to the assessment process.

After an internal review and revision is completed, it may be helpful to have those results evaluated by an outside consultant. This provides external feedback and an important endorsement of assessment.

Finally, following the above outline will ensure that the assessment of student learning plan is systematic, structured, and ongoing, and that it will have credibility beyond the classroom.

Closing Comment

As noted in the introduction, outcomes assessment is regarded with a robust skepticism by many in the academy. Nevertheless, our peers in the academy mandate its implementation in order to retain an essential accreditation.

This is not an attractive circumstance for any leader of assessment of student learning efforts. Carefully and sensitively implemented, however, assessment will begin a journey for faculty that will result in unplanned benefits. If resources and energy are prudently expended, an expected result can be an ongoing faculty discussion about improving student learning.

Welcome to the challenge!

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Introducing the Right Hand to the Left: Academic Assessment, Institutional Effectiveness, and the Self-Study Process

Randy Tate

Introduction

During the year prior to and immediately after the March 1998 accreditation visit by NCA, Evangel University became acutely aware that while it was working diligently on assessing student academic outcomes, it had given little attention to the connection between assessing student academic outcomes, assessing institutional effectiveness, and the self-study process. The primary problem was that while there was a plethora of assessment activities on campus, no single area knew what the other areas were doing. In addition, once an area finished an assessment project, no one beyond that area was aware of the results or changes based upon them. When the University's Self-Study Steering Committee began collecting data for the Self-Study Report, it was overwhelmed by both the sheer amount of material and its disorganized, incoherent condition. Consequently, the University has taken steps to ensure that ten years in the future, it will not face the nightmare of rummaging through piles of disjointed and obscure records that most people on campus never knew existed in the first place.

The following case study explains the manner in which Evangel University is presently addressing these three areas.

Assessing Academic Outcomes

☐ **The Problem:** *Translating institutional academic objectives into measurable outcomes within suitable contexts at reasonable cost.*

The problem is actually three-fold: (1) although approved by NCA, the assessment plan was too oblique with vague objectives, (2) the insufficient motivation of the students yielded data that were for all practical purposes meaningless, and (3) many of the standardized assessment tools were cost prohibitive.

☐ **The Response:** *The Assessment Committee completely rewrote the assessment plan with the goal of imbedding assessment of academic outcomes within the curriculum.*

After reviewing the assessment plan, the Assessment Committee decided to rewrite it in such a way that the objectives would form the major sections. The committee then teased out of these objectives academic skills for which it could identify accomplishment criteria and indicators.

When the various skills with accompanying criteria and indicators were identified, the committee began formulating a program for imbedding assessment in the curriculum. Given the enormity of the task, the committee decided to begin by identifying courses in which professors were already doing some sort of assessment as part of course requirements. Since some courses included oral and written presentations and critical thinking activities, the committee limited its focus to these three areas. Then began the long process of examining the various rubrics the professors were employing to assess these skills. Once the committee completed this task, it invited these professors and any others interested to attend a series of developmental seminars with the purpose of agreeing upon what common criteria define good written and oral communication skills and critical thinking skills regardless of the type and area of assignments. The final outcome of this program was a common rubric for assessing these skills and more faculty ownership of the assessment program. Over a period of time, the University will go through the same process for embedding assessment of its other objectives in the curriculum.

While the University will certainly make use of more standardized instruments, especially a variety of surveys for current students, alumni, and employers, embedded assessment costs practically nothing except time. It also partially eliminated the problem of student motivation.

Assessing Institutional Effectiveness and the Self-Study Process

☐ **The Problem:** *Identifying, collecting, and organizing the bulk of material.*

☐ **The Response:** *The Assessment Committee developed a way of bridging the gulf between itself and the various areas of the University.*

The chairperson of the Assessment Committee, who also served as the director of self-study, developed a plan for identifying, collecting, and organizing the bulk of the material that will be needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the University. The plan simply called for the enlargement of the Assessment Committee so that a liaison would be created between the Assessment Committee and each area of the University. Included in these areas are such offices as finance, alumni, career development, institutional development, student government, food services, security, student development, maintenance, and social services. The plan also includes liaisons between the Assessment Committee and the academic departments and all committees.

At the end of each academic year, each area submits a report to the liaison who in turn submits it to the Assessment Committee. These reports follow a prescribed format that requests certain types of information and allows the Assessment Committee to do three things. First, in addition to the data that the Assessment Committee collects and evaluates on its own (such as embedded assessment mentioned above, surveys, standardized instruments), this plan makes available to the Committee information of which it would have otherwise been unaware. We are finding that a significant amount of assessment is being conducted that relates directly to academic matters. Second, the plan makes the task of evaluating the effectiveness of the University much easier and more organized. The reports are both informational and evaluative allowing the Committee to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses. The value of the reports to serve as the starting points for institutional improvement is obvious. And third, the plan allows the Assessment Committee to produce an annual comprehensive report that documents all the assessment activities conducted during the academic year. The plan makes it possible for the University to gather data in an orderly and comprehensive manner over a period of several years eventually leading to a simpler self-study process.

Conclusion

Evangel University has spent several years treading the muddy waters of assessment before creating a plan that works most effectively for its educational context. Those who have worked with assessment and self-study believe that the plan does finally allow the left hand to know what the right hand is doing. There is no area of the University that does not come under the scrutiny of assessment. Each area—from athletics to committees—is held accountable for assessing and improving itself. With the individual reports and the comprehensive annual report, the University is granted a panoptic view of itself. While the plan is certainly not without problems, for an institution of the size and character of Evangel, the plan seems to be working quite well. In addition to the organization that the plan brings to the assessment and self-study process, it is working more effectively because it involves a large number of faculty, staff, and students. This involvement, reluctantly given in the beginning, has gone a long way in convincing the various constituents of the University of the value of assessment that leads eventually to a better institution accomplishing its mission with focus and accountability.

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The Not-So-Mad-Hatter and Friends Look at Assessment

M. Jane Hunter
Sally Foster Wallace
Mary L. Emmons

Background

In 1988, when the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association passed the resolution that began the assessment initiative, few people, likely even the Commissioners themselves, realized how they were affecting the academic lives of virtually all of the approximately one thousand colleges and universities in their nineteen-state region. Since that time, faculty and administrators have met, planned, organized, and anguished over just the right approach to assessment for their institution.

In the early 1990s, institutions having a comprehensive evaluation were expected to be at work on their assessment plan, and the team was to verify that they were making a good start. If not, the institution was usually asked to submit a report in a year or two on its progress with assessment. Many of the colleges that now are finding themselves uncertain about their assessment effort are those that were visited in the early 90s, told their assessment was OK, and put on a ten year cycle. In truth, many of these colleges simply breathed a sigh of relief that they "passed assessment" and went on about business as usual.

Now with a comprehensive visit again on the horizon, these colleges, as well as those that have been actively assessing over the years, are busy examining their assessment programs to see if they really are where they should be.

One community college that was in this situation was Parkland College in Champaign, Illinois. They knew early on that they needed to reexamine their assessment effort and likely make changes in preparation for their comprehensive visit in 2002. Therefore, in 1995, a chairperson was named and a committee was formed to accomplish this task. The committee–whose members and chair serve three-year terms–made good progress, but worried that the faculty as a whole was in need of recharging regarding assessment.

During the summer of 1998, Parkland's Academic Assessment Committee members determined that a presentation at their fall semester in-service was needed. They decided this should be an information session for faculty regarding the basics of assessment. They invited an individual from out-of-state with experience in assessment to be the "information giver." However, there was a feeling among those planning the pre-service that faculty would no doubt be polite but also somewhat, or perhaps greatly, bored by a traditional speech. Therefore, a format was set up where a faculty member known for her "sense of the dramatic" would work with the consultant to present a speech on assessment that would be funny! Assessment, funny? The consultant, for one, was skeptical but the faculty member was persuasive and prevailed. The event was a big success, and several members of the audience suggested the presenters should "take it on the road."

Assessment Issues Discussed

The general format of this session will be a general overview of the assessment initiative with particular regard to community colleges. Issues included are as follows:

- What is assessment? If we wait long enough, will it go away?
- Who is supposed to do assessment? Is it the faculty or the administration?

- What is supposed to be included in the assessment program?
- When should it be done?
- What is the best format for assessment?
- What advantage does it have for the college?
- What advantage does it have for the student?
- What advantage does it have for the community?
- What advantage does it have for the faculty?

In the time since this presentation was originally developed, Parkland has done some interesting work with program assessment, specifically in dental hygiene. Several additional questions have been added that relate to this work, which are as follows:

- Where is the best place to begin work on program assessment?
- What is included in program assessment?
- How often do data need to be collected?
- When does an institution stop assessment?

Conclusion

This session would be particularly interesting and important for individuals from institutions that are anticipating a comprehensive visit in the next three to five years. As part of early planning, the institution needs to review its assessment work, survey the current NCA expectations, and revise as necessary. This presentation will assist institutional representatives in making some decisions about where their institution is and what needs to be done to move its assessment program to the level that will meet the expectations of the visiting team.

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Chapter 9

Program Review

CONNECTING
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104th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
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Program Review at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis: The Process and Faculty Involvement

Karen E. Black
Sarah S. Baker

Founded in 1969, Indiana University-Purdue University (IUPUI) is a partnership between Indiana University and Purdue University and is located in Indianapolis, the largest and capitol city of Indiana. IUPUI has approximately 27,000 students studying in 184 degree programs offered by 20 schools, including the Indiana University Schools of Medicine, Law, and Dentistry. Prior to 1993 the campus had no formal program review process although several of the schools, including the School of Allied Health Sciences (SHS), and departments were accredited by national organizations. Our first program reviews were conducted in 1993-1994. To date we have reviewed 24 of the 41 departments and schools scheduled.

A joint undertaking between the schools and central administration, academic program review at IUPUI is designed to focus and improve programs. Through its mission and goals statement the campus committed itself to improving programs and services, to setting new standards for collaboration and interdisciplinary work, and to strengthening community connections that promote academic and cultural activities as well as economic and human development. Program review at IUPUI places emphasis on (1) involvement of campus administrators and faculty from IUPUI units other than the one undergoing review; (2) linkages between the program and the community it serves; and (3) connections between the review and planning, decision-making, and resource allocation at departmental, school, and campus levels.

Involvement at multiple levels is a cornerstone of the program review process. This involvement provides a mechanism to bring to bear the collective judgment of several constituencies to make program improvements. Involvement of faculty and staff from units other than those being reviewed promotes campus-wide understanding of the contributions of each unit to IUPUI's mission. Connections with the community–Indianapolis, Indiana, the region, or the nation–by involving community members as reviewers emphasize the importance of IUPUI's connections with the community it serves.

To further explain the process of IUPUI's program review, The School of Allied Health Sciences' experience will be used as an illustration.

Preparing for the Review and Self-Study

In 1995, IUPUI had completed six reviews of individual departments when the faculty and the dean of the School of Allied Health Sciences made a commitment to review the programs in the school. Shortly after the dates were selected for the review, the school undertook numerous activities. The first issue to consider was to determine if each program within the SAHS would be reviewed independently or if the school would be reviewed as one unit. Because numerous programmatic accreditation reviews are conducted within the SAHS, the SAHS executive committee in concert with the Dean decided that the SAHS would be reviewed holistically.

A special committee was formed to review the IUPUI Guidelines for Academic Program Review and to formulate an action plan. The Guidelines outline the purposes of program review, the responsibilities for program review, the criteria for the self-study document, and the follow-up process. The SAHS Dean and the committee agreed that an assessment plan should be an integral part of the planning process. A matrix format was developed and each program was instructed to develop an assessment plan. In some cases, information was easily obtainable because the majority of SAHS programs undergo summative accreditation reviews and are required to collect data continuously and assess effectiveness.

The second phase of the planning process focused on the completion of the Self-Study Report. The special committee's work was completed and thus it was disbanded. The Dean then mandated each program director to complete the self-study for his/her program. Following completion of this phase the Dean and his staff completed the overall self-study document and developed the SAHS overview. The final document contained the SAHS overview followed by separate self-study responses from each program. It is important to note that faculty input was requested or mandated in all phases of the planning process. Faculty members had ample time for input at the program and/or school level.

The Site Visit

Prior to the site visit, the team received the comprehensive self-study prepared by the SAHS describing the history of the School and its programs, planning efforts, enrollment history and status, faculty, resources, facilities, goals, assessment criteria, and overall strengths and concerns.

It is important to note that this review did not attempt to assess the quality of each program in the SAHS. Allied health academic units in colleges and universities are historically aggregations of a variety of health professions education programs for administrative convenience. Their similarities are no greater than those of programs in the liberal arts and sciences housed in a single school and the differences can be quite remarkable. Therefore, individual programs can vary widely in quality and effectiveness, even while "housed" in the same academic unit. Thus, a more formative review was conducted to assess the overall quality of programs, identify strengths and weaknesses, and provide recommendations for improvement.

At the invitation of IUPUI's Vice Chancellor for Planning and Institutional Improvement, a team of six individuals conducted a two and a half day site visit review of the SAHS. An orientation meeting with the Vice Chancellor for Planning and Institutional Improvement, the Executive Vice Chancellor and Dean of Faculties, the Associate Dean of the Graduate School, and the Dean of SAHS provided the team with an institutional context and charge for the review. During the orientation session, the team was asked to assess additional items not contained within the school's self-study document and respond to specific questions.

The team then spent the two days interviewing faculty, staff, alumni, and community representatives; reviewing documents provided by the school; and inspecting facilities. At a concluding session, the team provided an overview of the final report that was to be submitted approximately a month after the visit. The team organized this preliminary oral report around the charges given at the orientation session. The team's comments related to the quality of SAHS programs and represented an overall consensus arrived at after meeting with faculty, students, and alumni across programs.

The School's Response to the Reviewers' Report

Following the site-visit the reviewers generated a written report identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the SAHS. The report presented a list of recommendations that the team believed would strengthen the school. The dean shared the report with all faculty and formed a committee of faculty and administrators to draft a response. All faculty were provided the opportunity for input. The faculty accepted the final response at a School faculty meeting.

Although the dean responsible for the school at the time of the review left to take another position, the current dean and faculty have used much of the review information generated to improve program effectiveness and student learning. A strategic planning session and vision have helped to determine a timetable for other items to be implemented. Assessment plans have become an integral part of many programs and are continually updated to reflect current practices. For those programs with external disciplinary accreditation, the assessment plan has augmented the process and provided valuable information. In some programs, the assessment plan has been offered by accrediting agencies as an example of good practice. Post-professional programs without external disciplinary accreditation are more likely to struggle to update continually assessment plans showing program evaluation.

Recommendations for Improvement

- Clearly articulate the purpose for the review. Many in SAHS assumed that this process would be similar to summative accreditation site-visits.
- Instill greater internal ownership by the faculty.
- Develop an interim plan midway through the review cycle to evaluate progress post-review.
- Develop a strong strategic plan and vision with timelines for implementation of activities
- Conduct professional development seminars to provide faculty with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement improvements.

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Effectively Linking Program Assessments to Program Decisions: A Departmental Case Study

William E. Roweton

Responding to accreditation standards, postsecondary educators evaluate the qualities of their instructional programs periodically. Frequently, measures of student learning, many supposedly affected by instructional effectiveness, are employed in simple and, far less commonly, in remarkably sophisticated assessment designs. But, in spite of divergent approaches and different levels of commitment to program evaluation, many postsecondary educators seek to link, conceptually at least, the quality of specific curriculum experiences to student learning.

However, utilizing assessment data well enough to connect empirically pedagogical parameters to levels of student learning challenges even seasoned program evaluators. Perhaps, by coupling reliable and valid program assessments with other institutional and student characteristics, data-based instructional planning may be possible.

The phrase, "data-based instructional decision-making," is easier to write than to accomplish. Inferring causal patterns from correlated data-sets presents daunting statistical and psychometric technicalities, too often creating more confusion than clarity. Frustration results.

Discouraging for many postsecondary program evaluators are unresolved statistical questions about analyzing small, non-random samples of student learning. To further undermine data quality, program assessment results are generated, too frequently, from compromised psychometric protocols. These two problems together–small datasets and compromised psychometric quality–are too common in academic program evaluations to be ignored. Real assessment data compromise crucial textbook assumptions about "normal" test statistics.

Poor data quality, unfortunately, is not the only stochastic impediment for academic program evaluators. Somehow, assessment results need to be analyzed so that they inform instructional decision-making. Building durable conceptual and quantitative bridges–the decision-model–linking, convincingly and logically, numerical data to instructional planning complicates this project considerably. However, the effort is promising.

The incorporation of program assessments in instructional planning may be the most valuable application for academic program evaluation data. However, successful data-based instructional decision-making stems from planning models that connect reliable and valid data to curriculum characteristics. Program assessment data can be an essential component in these planning models.

Today's Presentation

This presentation expresses these general queries about data assessment quality, psychometric protocols, and decision-making in the practical language of a case study. Perhaps this focused and specific discussion mirrors the experiences of many academic program evaluators.

A review of one Department's assessment data and experiences assembled over five years of program assessments will illustrate options for analyzing small data-sets and evaluate its reliance on one standardized measure of cognitive learning. More importantly, the Department is building a decision-model bridging assessment data and instructional planning.

Work in Progress

The Department's multi-year bank of program assessment data is being utilized to build a simple *causal model* that will conceptually and statistically support a *decision model.*

First, *derive a causal model.* Once fully developed, this model will relate schematically instructional and psychological variables to student learning. Moreover, the "causal construct" will connect stochastically exogenous and up-stream variables, like student abilities, to endogenous and down-stream variables, like student achievement. Technically, it is not now certain how far a "causal" model can evolve from the simpler cross-lagged (longitudinal) panel correlational design (e.g., Spector, 1981) to a structural equation model (SEM) (e.g., Schumacker & Lomax, 1996). Ultimately, data and psychometric quality determine the strength of any model and, in this case, questions about data-quality may plague development.

Second, *design a decision model.* The decision model should utilize the bank of assessment data, among other data, to support instructional planning. To begin, we suspect that variables like curriculum content, instructional presentation style, topic sequencing, and other instructional parameters as well as student variables predict levels of student learning. Of course, many of these predictive variables may represent decisions, for example, in instructional planning about class size and curriculum content. Therefore, the connections between quantified variables and instructional decision-making can be obvious—and practical.

Together, these two models encourage data-based instructional planning. However, this project's success depends on keeping model construction choices simple and realistic.

- **Choices.** Practical model building depends on a realistic project focus, right from the start. Mechanically retracing the general steps for program assessment simply will not do. Roweton's (1997) all-purpose, nine-step cycle of program-assessment development, implementation, and application activities are far too unspecified for causal model construction, failing to specify variables or to indicate how results and instructional planning could be linked. Again, simple and realistic initial choices are needed.

  The Department chose to build, more by accident than by forethought, its undergraduate program assessment around one standardized, quantitative measure of student-learning. Fortunately, the cognitive, quantitative, knowledge-outcome program assessment focus offered a manageable start for causal model construction. At least, our initial approach built from established methodological and statistical traditions.

Procedures and Results

To create models predicting student learning and facilitating instructional decision-making requires more data than our undergraduate program assessment activity now yields. The Department's original assessment approach captures student learning data primarily from spring administrations of ETS's *Major Field Test in Psychology II (Major Field Tests: Psychology II Test,* 1995) to approximately a dozen student volunteers annually. To statistically link predictors to student achievement, additional kinds of data are needed.

Traditionally, mounting qualitative and quantitative data streams collect as students progress educationally, and archival data approaches for profiling students are nearly countless. So, to realistically focus the project, the selection of variables was guided initially by Vincent Tinto's (e.g., 1987) research on first-year college student attrition and the literature it stimulated (e.g., Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Of course, college attrition is not student learning, the focus of this project; but we believed Tinto's publications would still inform.

At times, Tinto and his colleagues related student-achievement—the predictive focus of this project—to significant institutional and psychological variables, including attrition. Over the years, these researchers cultivated and masterfully related numerous institutional databases. Eventually, Tinto's multivariate construct was tested as a path analytic model (e.g., Terenzini, Pascarella, Theophilides, & Lorang, 1985). Therefore, the Tinto-literature offered this project insights on productively managing traditional institutional databases as well as transforming a multivariate conceptual construct into a causal model. (Regrettably, research on undergraduate psychology instruction is not sophisticated quantitatively, although its literature is provocative, e.g., McGovern, 1993.)

- **Adding institutional databases.** The project added to the Department's *Psychology II* measure of student learning two datasets drawn from institutional archives:
  - composite and subscores on ACT; and
  - student transcripts.

Like Psychology II, these datasets match the cognitive, quantifiable, knowledge-outcome character of the project well. Other institutional records are being explored and will eventually add variables to the causal model.

◇ **Exploratory data analysis (EDA).** Model construction began, quite descriptively, with an extensive exploratory data analysis (EDA). So typical throughout EDA's brief history (e.g., Behrens, 1997; Tukey, 1977), graphical displays, residual analysis, and data transformations identified outliers, fringeliers, and non-linearity, thereby suggesting hypotheses to be tested during initial confirmatory data analyses (CDA).

◇ **First-generation causal model.** The EDA suggested a basic conceptual model connecting student achievement to three predictive clusters of (1) student, (2) teacher, and (3) context variables. First, student variables sample the learner's attitudes, abilities, and skills, all of which may predict Psychology II performance. Second, teacher variables—again, attitudes, abilities, and skills—may mediate student test performance. Last, other factors affecting learning—the context variables—are largely institutional characteristics like class size, type of delivery, etc. The project focuses on student variables, first.

Results of early model construction will be described in this presentation.

Conclusions

Program assessment results must enhance instructional decision-making if investments in academic program evaluations are to produce more than postsecondary busyness. Academic program assessments could be, this presentation argues, the heart of postsecondary instructional planning. Much depends on whether real academic program assessment data can be embedded into a predictive, multivariate, causal model and into a decision model linking realistically instructional and psychological variables to student learning.

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Chapter 10

NCA

Special Challenges: Making Connections in Special Institutional Contexts

CONNECTING
THE DISCONNECTS

104th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
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Connecting the Disconnects: Academic Governance in a Multi-Campus Environment

Linda R. Lindsay
Sandra Harley

Perspective

Davenport College is an independent college that spans ten permanent locations in a geographic area that is approximately 120 miles wide and 250 miles long, crossing a state line and its corresponding time zone change. Historically, the college has contended with an academic decision-making process, which evolved in a multi-campus environment that grew by means of acquiring autonomous, independent colleges. In this situation, how does a college maintain a unified academic plan and still preserve each location's ability to offer the educational services most desirable to its location? Based upon higher education theory, the Frame and Free Model developed as a practical solution that "connects the disconnects" of a very diverse college with a single curriculum structure.

Frame and Free

During Academic Year 1995-96, the vice president for academic affairs used some of the basic concepts of Stark and Lattuca's (1996) newly articulated elements of an academic plan to develop a college-wide model for academic decision making. The model also incorporates concepts found in the writings of two other educational theorists, Barr and Tagg (1995), in particular their description of the Learning Paradigm. Using the aforementioned work as a theoretical base, the college's academic leaders brought together the many academic decision-making processes under one rubric, referred to as the Frame and Free Curriculum Design and Decision-Making Model. Several processes had to be amended and others added. The model has given the college's academic leaders a coherent method with which to deal with the multiple aspects of curriculum in its many dimensions across Davenport College's locations.

In the Frame and Free model, the frame constitutes the mechanisms which ensure that each element (purpose, content, sequence, learners, instructional processes, instructional resources, evaluation, and adjustment) of the academic plan is being addressed at the course, program, and college levels. The faculty in cooperation with the academic leaders developed two standardized "checkpoint" processes, which support this frame: Guidelines for Establishing Programs (GEPs) and Program Review Process (PRP). Both are available as session handouts. Utilizing these checkpoint processes leads to quality programs that are closely related to the marketplace and provide measurable learning outcomes.

While the "free" of the Frame and Free model refers to each location's ability to accept or reject the offering of a program, the location also has the ability within the frame to deliver programs or courses in ways that satisfy its marketplace (e.g., distance learning). The free aspect encourages faculty and location academic leaders to heed Barr and Tagg's (1995) call to shift from a teaching to a learning paradigm. The new curriculum epitomizes the student's ability to be a full participant in his/her learning. Using the Frame and Free Model assists in meeting the academic goal to provide quality academic programs that are flexible, innovative, responsive to workplace needs, and learner-centered.

New program development can be initiated by any college location in cooperation with a faculty department or by a faculty department itself. Interested parties in developing a new curriculum proceed with the completion of the Guidelines for Establishing Programs (GEP) and submit the completed document to the Academic Council for review.

The GEPs represent those issues that are most important to developing a program: assessing market needs, planning the program, assessing the teaching experience, and assessing the learning experience. Once the program has been reviewed by the Academic Council, locations are able to go forward with establishing the new program at their sites while college-wide departmental faculty develop or adjust content to meet learning outcomes. It is during this period of development that delivery options are explored and student prerequisites are determined.

Continuous improvement of academic programming is encouraged through periodic program review that prompts the evaluation of learning outcomes, resource allocations and generation, and relevance of curriculum. During Academic Year 1994/95, the faculty developed a set of questions referred to as the Program Review Process (PRP), to guide each department through program review. The PRP questions are a mirror image of the questions asked in the GEPs. Essentially, the guidelines ask, "How and what are you going to deliver as an educational program?" while the PRP asks, "How well did you deliver what you said you were going to do?" It is the Committee for Curriculum Review's (CCR) intention to review every program every four years or sooner. Under the "Guiding Principles for Conducting Program Review" developed by the CCR, program review is a form of peer review carried out in a collegial manner to build stronger departments and assure quality programming. College-wide departments are responsible for compiling the PRP and formulating proposed program modifications or program deletion–the Academic Council monitors the effectiveness of the process. During the first two years, four college-wide departments completed program review and found that it was a valuable tool for identifying curriculum strengths and areas for improvement. Upon review and analysis of the data presented in the PRP, campus leaders make decisions regarding keeping or deleting programs on their campus.

Results

Evolving out the adoption of the Frame and Free model has been a more responsive committee structure as evidenced by the Academic Council, Assessment Team, and Curriculum Committee. Once committee members began thinking of curriculum as having issues unique to a level (course, program, and college), then the pertinent curriculum questions for each level could be identified. These questions guide which committee or college group is best suited for providing the decision for the particular curriculum issue. By clearly identifying the level where the issue resides, equilibrium between "tight" and "loose" control of the academic governance process is established.

Examples of the Frame and Free Model's impact on strategic planning at both the campus and college level are numerous. For instance, several campuses have adapted the GEP process to facilitate market and resource planning on the local campus level–calling it the "mini GEP" process. This downscaled model provides a local filtering system for new program development that assures an identified market for the program and that necessary resources are available for development and initial delivery of the program before submitting the proposal to the college-wide Academic Council. The newly developed college-wide Distance Learning Network has asked faculty departments to use the GEP process to identify programs that are of interest for future development as on-line programs.

The philosophy for connecting the college parts to the whole by constructing a frame built upon the crucial questions that undergirds all academic decisions has led to greater understanding at the campus level and with the faculty as to the areas where innovation and market responsiveness are appropriate. And, where college-wide decisions effect a curriculum decision are made, versus campus-based decisions, a single curriculum structure has been solidified that eases the Assessment Team's measurement, college-wide, of student academic achievement. In addition, students may select educational opportunities at any of 10 campuses or through other delivery options and be assured that the educational integrity of their degree is maintained. In retrospect, Frame and Free has not only been a valuable tool for understanding curriculum questions but also has been beneficial for sorting some of the many problems inherent to a multi-campus college.

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Composing NCA and Specialized Accreditation Documents: Shortcuts for the Health Professions

Mark Cummings
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Background

Universities training students in health sciences programs accept without qualm participation in both programmatic and institutional accreditation. The challenge facing universities with such programs is to learn how to cope successfully with the competing demands placed on them by both institutional and the large number of specialized accreditation agencies. In a perfect world, NCA and specialized accreditation agencies would agree on the same approaches in assessing quality. Since we operate in an imperfect world, wide variances are evident in terms of method of evaluation, emphasis in accreditation standards, format for the self-study document, uniqueness in the review process, and in the conduct of the on-site visit.

Each accreditation agency seeks to devise the best way to measure and assess educational quality. Universities offering programs in the health professions are asked to follow diverse methods to achieve this goal. It is not uncommon to have more than one self-study team working on accreditation activities simultaneously with each seeking similar information and data. Under these circumstances, administration and support personnel are asked either to participate directly on self-study committees or, at the minimum, to provide data/reports needed to compile a self-study document. Such requests are typically received on short notice and with little forewarning.

A comparative analysis between NCA standards and specialized accreditation agencies in the health professions shows differences in terms of approach, emphasis, and process of evaluation.

In general terms, some key differences include the following:

- Specialized accreditation agencies tend to have prescriptive standards that require a program to meet a comprehensive set of core elements as minimum criteria. As a result, their standards tend to be longer, more detailed, and less open to innovation and experimentation in methods of structure and course delivery.
- Compared to NCA, there is generally less emphasis on outcome and assessment activities, institutional integrity, addressing of larger societal issues (e.g., affirmative action), and methods of course delivery.
- The length of time granted by specialized agencies for continuing approval is considerably shorter, which requires more frequent reviews and preparation for either comprehensive or focused visits. New programs in the health professions oftentimes will be site visited annually until the inaugural class has graduated and full accreditation status has been achieved.

Despite these and other fundamental differences, many common elements exist between NCA and specialized accreditation agencies. It is in these areas where opportunities present themselves to integrate and share information and content drawn from self-study documents. Experience can be an effective teacher. Our institution, Midwestern University, holds NCA accreditation; separate accreditation for two colleges of osteopathic medicine; separate accreditation for two colleges of pharmacy; and separate accreditation for programs in physician assistant studies, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. Current plans are to add new programs that require specialized accreditation. The suggestions offered in this session are a response on how to function effectively and efficiently in circumstances that demand a great deal of attention to accreditation activities.

Lessons Learned

The essential lessons learned are to standardize whenever possible and to identify either an individual or a department as the resource center for support of accreditation activities, especially those of self-study committees.

☐ Benefits of standardization

Standardization is applicable in a wide variety of accreditation activities that can provide scale of economy savings in terms of the human and physical resources at the university. What follows is a list of suggested initiatives that underscores the value of standardization.

◇ **Accreditation reports.** Most accrediting agencies request data or reports prepared in ways that complement their review process. The NCA has its General Institutional Requirements (GIRs), most specialized agencies ask for reports on student performance on license or certifying examinations, and there are many unique reports requested, such as one that requires tracking the professional careers chosen by graduates of the program. In an effort to be thorough, it makes sense to review and compile a list of the data and reports requested by all accreditation agencies. Once this is done, the institution can prepare a comprehensive list of the reports and data for accreditation agencies. This list, when added to the other reports mandated by state and federal agencies, becomes the standard list of reports routinely supported and generated by the university.

The next step is the apportionment of responsibility for the collection and generation of the required reports. Individuals, departments, or programs are apprised of their duties and the list is shared. Changes in accreditation standards or the addition of a new educational program require a periodic review of assignments. This step is designed to ensure that the university consistently collects information that is necessary for the work of self-study committees and is readily available to site visit teams.

◇ **Creation of boiler plates.** Overlap and redundancy occur frequently in the activities of institutional and specialized accreditation agencies. This fortunate happenstance allows a university to integrate content, especially handy in the preparation of self-study documents. A certain amount of information required by nearly all accreditation agencies can be compiled, updated periodically, and readied for use in self-study documents. These templates tend to be descriptive portions of self-study documents that provide background information to the inspection team and the accreditation body. These include elements within the university that are not dynamic and change somewhat infrequently. Items well suited for boilerplate development might include the following:

○ Brief history of the institution

○ Recent events and/or accomplishments of the university

○ Summarization of the long-range plan for the university

○ Issues the university is presently facing and addressing appropriately

○ The mission statement of the university and its explanation

○ Description of institutional governance, inclusive of the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, and students

○ Brief narrative of the bylaws, articles of incorporation, degree-granting authority from the State, and other documents required for external approval to operate

○ Summarization of research and grant activity

○ Lists of faculty development activity, student affairs programming, and staff development training

○ Description of library and computer resources

○ Compilation of audited annual reports outlining financial operations

○ Annual reports depicting development and institutional advancement activities

Such templates become an institutional resource for a self-study committee when it needs descriptive text to provide background information. The boilerplate material is not a substitute for the qualitative assessment of educational quality. The standardization of information provides a consistency in presenting the institution and significantly reduces the workload of the individual assigned to edit the self-study document. Having this boilerplate allows the self-study committee to focus its attention on assessment and evaluative activities. Such information is also a resource to the committee in its deliberations and formulation of conclusions.

☐ The importance of an accreditation liaison

The second suggestion is to designate a single individual or department to oversee the assigned reports and the boiler plate materials. This liaison is responsible for the collection, supervision, and accuracy of the data and information. In short, the liaison becomes the repository for all information routinely used for institutional and specialized accreditation activities. Once the various reports and data are centralized in one location, the task of dissemination of information is made easier. Universities can use their electronic networking abilities to publish information for internal use through the Intranet network and externally through the Internet. Samples of how this could be structured might include the following:

Intranet Web Pages	**Internet Web Pages**
Self-Study Assessment Documents	Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine
University Assessment Plan, Part I	Chicago College of Pharmacy
University Assessment Plan, Part II	College of Health Sciences
University Assessment Plan, Part III	Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine
Fact Book	College of Pharmacy-Glendale
Enrollment	**Demographics**
1995/98 Summary Statistics	1995/98, Downers Grove
Five-Year Enrollment Statistics	1996/98, Glendale
1996/98 Tuition	1995/98, Age Distribution
Student & Instructor Ratings	**Outcomes**
Index to Student Ratings	Board Scores
Index to Charts of Student Ratings	Degrees Awarded
Index to Instructor Ratings	

Conclusions

These suggestions are designed to facilitate the self-study process and the presentation of information to the site visit team. Adoption of these methods provides shortcuts in preparation for accreditation reviews, but it is not a substitute for initiatives to improve the quality of educational programs. Benefits noted of this approach include the following:

- Reduced time for administration staff who are asked repeatedly for the same information by different groups working on accreditation projects
- Consistency of reports/data and increased accuracy
- Reduced time in assembling a self-study report, less editing, and more energy expended by committee members to focus on the more complex issues to accreditation
- Guidance and direction to inexperienced faculty new to accreditation who are looking for models that have worked effectively in the past

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Building a University: The Change Process and Institutional Merger

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This paper offers a narrative review of a series of accreditation processes that was triggered by the merger of two schools accredited by North Central and an intended merger with a third that was not. The visit came three years after the acquisition and approved inclusion of a hitherto unaccredited school in Miami, Florida. Together these schools are now called Trinity International University.

Trinity International University offers an unusual example of institutional merger as–following on a history of church and institutional affiliations–in the 1990s four distinct institutions have been brought together to form the nucleus of a small university. Trinity traces its roots to Scandinavian immigrants in the latter half of the nineteenth century, whose churches developed schools to train pastors, beginning with the Norwegian-Danish Department of Chicago Theological Seminary (1884) and the First Swedish Evangelical Free Church in Chicago (1897). The parent denominations eventually merged, and the lineal descendants of these schools were Trinity College and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, both located in Bannockburn, Illinois, from the early 1960s. As schools affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America they have had separate boards and academic governance.

In 1993 the Commission extended Trinity College's accreditation to include its South Florida Campus, hitherto the independent Miami Christian College. From the early 1980s the College and Divinity school have shared a common president and certain common services, and in February of 1995 they were renamed "Trinity International University." The Commission recognized the name change by listing the schools as "TIU-Trinity College" and "TIU-Trinity Evangelical Divinity School," pending the planned merger which took place in July 1996 of the corporations for the College, the Divinity School, and the South Florida Campus. The merger initiated the university as a single academic organization, and triggered a focused visit under the Commission's requirements for institutional change.

In parallel with these developments, Trinity had been in discussion with Simon Greenleaf University, a small and unaccredited California law school with additional graduate programs, about the possibility of merger or other incorporation into the university. There was also campus planning for the development of a new Graduate School, separate from the College and Divinity School, which would operate essentially as a consortial project, building on their resources, to facilitate graduate program development in fields other than theology; and to include the MA in Counseling Psychology, which would be transferred from the Divinity School to this more suitable academic location. The school was already able to develop further master's programs at its Deerfield campus, but needed a mechanism to enable it to launch the Counseling program in Miami and assimilate the hitherto unaccredited graduate programs in Anaheim, California. After staff consultation with North Central it was decided to add to the mandated focused visit both the request for the inclusion of the law school, and a request that Trinity be able to move graduate programs to its several sites.

The logic behind these successive affiliations and mergers was mission focused. As institutions of the Evangelical Free Church of America, both Trinity College and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School hold a common confessional position (to which agreement is required of faculty) and a commitment to the development of distinctively Christian higher education. The close association of the schools, with a common site and president and various common functions, led naturally to moves for corporate and educational unity. Miami Christian College was likewise an evangelical Christian institution, and Simon Greenleaf University was also driven by a congruent mission. Both the Miami and Anaheim schools had boards that respected Trinity and the energetic leadership of its then president, Dr. Kenneth M. Meyer (who became chancellor in 1995). These schools sought the fiscal stability that it was hoped would come from their association in a larger and established institution that shared a common mission.

The Accreditation Process

The focused visit in September 1996 therefore had the following purposes:

1. *to examine, as required by NCA, the merger and subsequent corporate and academic restructuring of Trinity College and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School into Trinity International University (TIU) from 1 July 1996;*
2. *to examine the request of TIU to move its graduate programs around its U.S. sites within the context of the Graduate School (a new school in the University);*
3. *to examine the proposed merger of Trinity International University and Simon Greenleaf University (Anaheim, California);*
4. *and to request the arrangement of the next comprehensive evaluation for Trinity International University (the merged institution) in 1999-2000 (from 1998-99 which is the next comprehensive evaluation date for the Divinity School; the College's next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 2003-2004).*

Since these changes, actual and planned, were plainly complex and demanding exercises, both the self-study committee (which in the nature of the case had limited time to prepare materials) and the visiting team were faced with a particularly demanding task. We offer some reflections on the process below.

The team's recommendations to the Commission were these: to endorse the merging of the College and Divinity School into the university, and to agree the rescheduling of the decennial, but to deny both the request in relation to the graduate programs and also approval for the merger with Simon Greenleaf University. The major concern of the team in the latter respect was the burden that the acquisition would place on the school's human and financial resources. In relation to the graduate programs, the team was reluctant to give open-ended approval to new program development on other sites, especially in light of the weaknesses (recognized by both the self-study committee and the team) in the graduate programs in California.

However, the team was well-disposed to the one particular program (the professional MA in Counseling Psychology) which it was intended to initiate on the South Florida Campus in Miami. They noted in their report that this was "a commendable plan that serves an important and unique need," and after discussion with Commission staff it was decided to bring this matter to a Review Committee, which was held on February 3, 1997. The school prepared a careful assessment of the proposed new program in light of a set of criteria that had been established earlier (and drawn praise from the team) for the location of a program on a new site. These principles were drawn from an application of the NCA's Criteria and GIRs, and reflected the good practice guidelines of the Council of Graduate Schools. This further report also responded in detail to the sections of the team's original report, which touched on the South Florida Campus and the proposed new program there, flowing out of a fresh review of the project by administrators on both campuses and some new approaches to difficulties faced by the program.

The visiting team, through the chair, offered their unanimous support, and the program was recommended for approval by the Review Committee.

The other negative recommendation from the visiting team that the merger with Simon Greenleaf University not be approved was more problematic. The basic reason for the team's concern was the stress that acquiring this school would place on institutional resources, since the California school was in deficit, did not have its own reserves, and had already received loans from Trinity during the development of a fraternal and consulting relationship in the preceding year. It was also recognized on all sides that for the law school, the central program of the California institution, to fulfill its potential there would be further investment needed in a situation in which development work had been neglected.

The president and his executive team made two immediate decisions, in consultation with the board chair, after the exit interview closed. First, Trinity would withdraw further financial support for Greenleaf; there would be no further loans. This was considered to be an entailment of the recommendation in respect of institutional resources and therefore a proper response on behalf of the school. Secondly, Trinity would not however withdraw from its intention to bring about the inclusion of Greenleaf, and especially its law program, into the university. There would be urgent approaches made to potential donors, to see if resources could be found that would address the concerns of the team: that is, resources that would be additional to present or anticipated support of the university as a whole, and therefore that would enable Trinity to return to the Commission with a further request.

The next three months proved a challenging time for Simon Greenleaf University. Fiscal pressures required that some staff be laid off and, eventually, all remaining staff and faculty agreed to a voluntary cut in salary to seek to keep the school open through the end of the semester without support from Trinity. This time of stress also proved one of dedication and commitment, in that the (mainly adjunct) faculty were asked by the interim dean to agree to volunteer to teach out existing students in the four-year evening program, according to the regulations of the State Bar, in the event that the school should close its doors, which was expected to occur at year's end if new funding could not be identified. Faculty readily agreed.

Meanwhile, development initiatives by Trinity and Greenleaf personnel were persistent. At the eleventh hour (on Christmas Eve) a call was received from a donor who supported both the schools, and who had made a major commitment to Trinity, to extend and restructure his gift on condition that Trinity reengage its consultancy relationship with Greenleaf and take the question of approval of the inclusion of Greenleaf within the university back to the Commission. The tide had turned.

At each stage in this process, the school was careful to keep Commission staff informed and to seek their counsel, which proved both wise and encouraging. The former president of Trinity, now chancellor, was assigned responsibility for management of the project. A multi-year-turnaround plan was assembled, and a request was made to the Commission for a further focused visit, which took place in September 1997.

On this occasion a different approach was taken by the university, on the recommendation of the then provost. Rather than seek approval for the inclusion of Simon Greenleaf University "as is," it was decided to focus on the school of law. The remaining MA and Certificate programs (with some one hundred part-time students) would be left as part of a rump unaccredited institution, and taught out through the lifetime of the statute of limitations for their degrees. Suitably qualified students could transfer into a Trinity program and take extension courses in California. Approval would be sought from the Commission for the inclusion of the law school into the university, which was operated under the standards of the State Bar of California and then housed some forty evening students.

During the first half of 1997 a self-study committee was assembled with participants on both campuses, and a series of initiatives was taken in parallel to upgrade the administration, faculty, and facilities of the law school. In tandem with Trinity's process with the Commission, the law school was pursuing provisional accreditation with the State Bar, and succeeded in securing that status that had eluded the school since its foundation in 1980 in May of 1997.

It was recognized that in seeking to include a California law school, Trinity was bringing to the Commission a case of first impression. That is, California is unusual in permitting law schools, usually small, sometimes for-profit, institutions to operate without approval from the American Bar Association; either with or without accreditation from the State Bar, and with appropriate state approvals. In Illinois, this would not be possible, as only graduates of ABA-approved schools are permitted to sit for the state bar examination. The self-study committee therefore decided to give prime focus to the accreditation requirements of the State Bar, since that offered accepted standards of excellence in legal education in California. While Trinity's long-term plan is to build the school according to the standards of the American Bar Association, and has initiated preliminary discussions with the ABA to this effect, there was concern on the part of the administration lest the law school be judged by the team in accordance with inappropriate ABA criteria.

The visiting team, which included an ABA law school dean, endorsed the approach taken by the school, and recommended approval of its inclusion into the university. The chief concern of the team was in relation to the long-term plans of the university, especially for development, since major funding would be required to build the school toward the standards of the ABA. So a requirement was made that a development plan be filed with the Commission.

By January 1999, enrollment has risen to almost 100, day classes are being offered, the school has relocated with a ten-year lease in Santa Ana, and an application for full accreditation has been filed with the State Bar and well received by the State Bar's Educational Standards consultant. A site review will take place in Spring 1999.

As of February 1998, Trinity International University therefore consists of four schools: the College of Arts and Sciences (including the South Florida Campus in Miami); Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; Trinity Graduate School (with programs in Deerfield, Illinois, and Miami); and Trinity Law School; together with extension courses offered in various locations, including Washington, D.C.

Reflections

As emerges from this narrative, the period from its renaming in 1995 has proved a complex and challenging time for the university. With significant help and support from Commission staff, the administration initiated a succession of interrelated accreditation processes intended to give shape to a multi-site institution with four schools.

- Given the complexity of the situation, with multiple sites and schools and a series of interrelated requests, we see the importance of clarity in presentation to the team; the need to give the clearest possible picture of a situation that even those who know it well can find confusing. This involves excising distracting materials from the body of the report, and indicating with care how different documents relate to each other and the institution.

- The task engaged by this institution in merging the schools has been immense, with implications that will be unfolding for years to come; and the parallel task of capturing and presenting this process to the Commission is of similar proportions. Questions, such as those of "campus culture," are often slow to emerge, but need to be identified; and they partly arise from the ambient culture: Orange County, CA; Dade County, FL; and Lake County, IL, are about as unalike as any three counties in this nation. In our case, a group of alumni from one campus (California) significantly opposed the merger process in a way that surprised us and that we should have better anticipated. Faculty concerns and misgivings will require long term attention.

- Part of a proper response to the preceding point is to seek to maintain the distinct identities of the component schools or units. At Trinity we reconsidered several decisions that had merged the identity of constituent schools through seemingly technical but in fact controversial decisions on matters such as letterhead design. Both substantive and symbolic matters need to be given weight, and where possible existing identities left undisturbed. This is especially important for alumni and others one step removed from the institution.

- The timetable behind major institutional change is often inversely proportioned to their significance, since it may be fed by fiscal or other considerations that have their own urgency. In that context, parallel processing is inevitable. But its limits need to be noted, and the value of frontloading issues such as the careful development or clarification of mission and values statements cannot be stressed too much, especially where the change process is bringing divergent organizations together, to ensure ownership of the process on the part of associated stakeholders and appropriate support for those charged with administrative and accreditation leadership.

- Plainly, there are huge benefits to be had from connecting the disconnects. The future of many small colleges lies in the economies of scale and focusing of human and other resources that come from amalgamations, and one of the lessons of Trinity's experience is that even without geographical proximity these linkages can be successful.

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Organizational Effectiveness in Specialized Colleges of Nursing and Health Sciences in the United States: A Research Report

Gail A. Lamb

Summary Statement

This study described and analyzed the organizational effectiveness of the institutions affiliated with the Specialized Colleges of Nursing and Health Sciences (SCNHS) in the United States as perceived by their chief executive officers, and in relation to Dr. Kim Cameron's nine dimensions of organizational effectiveness and to overall organizational effectiveness. The relationships between the following independent variables and organizational effectiveness were explored: size of student body, composition of faculty, governance structure, and stage of transition process.

Purpose

This research was a first attempt to report on the total population of the Specialized Colleges of Nursing and Health Sciences in the United States by describing these institutions in relationship to overall organizational effectiveness as well as the nine dimensions of organizational effectiveness. This study was intended to provide information that might verify the challenges associated with the transition process of these institutions to becoming degree-granting. It was expected that the availability of the results of this research would add significant information to the literature and knowledge base regarding the specialized colleges of nursing as those institutions move toward becoming fully-accredited institutions of higher education with degree-granting power.

Research Questions

1. What is the distribution of the specialized colleges of nursing in the United States on Overall Organizational Effectiveness and on each of the nine dimensions of organizational effectiveness: Student Educational Satisfaction, Student Academic Development, Student Career Development, Student Personal Development, Faculty and Administrator Employment Satisfaction, Professional Development and Quality of the Faculty, System Openness and Community Interaction, Ability to Acquire Resources, Organizational Health?
2. What is the distribution on Overall Organizational Effectiveness and on the nine dimensions of organizational effectiveness of the specialized colleges of nursing that have received program accreditation and those specialized colleges of nursing in transition?
3. What is the relationship between the following independent variables and Overall Organizational Effectiveness as well as the nine dimensions of organizational effectiveness at specialized colleges of nursing: size of student body, composition of faculty, governance structure, stage of transition process?

Dependent Variables

Organizational Effectiveness, as expressed in the measurement of the nine organizational effectiveness dimensions and overall organizational effectiveness.

Independent Variables

1. Size of student body
2. Composition of faculty, as expressed through four components related to the proportion of full and part-time faculty, and educational level of faculty.
3. Governance structure
4. Stage of transition process

Major Results

Responses from chief executive officers of fifty-eight of the sixty-two specialized colleges of nursing and health sciences provided a 93.5 percent return for the data analysis. Descriptive statistics were utilized to describe the distribution, the mean, the standard deviation, and the skewness for the SCNHS on the overall composite of organizational effectiveness and on each of the nine dimensions. The SCNHS were also divided into two groups, those who achieved accreditation of the nursing degree program from the National League for Nursing, and those who were still in some stage of the transition process. The same descriptive statistics were utilized to study the two groups.

Pearson correlation coefficients, independent samples t-tests, and one-way analysis of variance were performed to determine the relationships between the independent variables and overall organizational effectiveness as well as the nine dimensions of organizational effectiveness.

It was concluded that the chief executive officers of the SCNHS perceived their institutions positively rather than negatively on overall organizational effectiveness and on each of the nine dimensions of organizational effectiveness. The institutions were rated the highest on the organizational effectiveness dimensions of Faculty and Administrator Employment Satisfaction, Student Career Development, and Student Educational Satisfaction. The institutions were rated the lowest on Professional Development and Quality of the Faculty, and the Ability to Acquire Resources.

It was also concluded that the size of the student body had a statistically significant positive relationship with seven of the nine dimensions of organizational effectiveness, as well as with the overall composite. The number of full-time faculty equivalents (FTEs) had a statistically significant positive relationship with six of the organizational effectiveness dimensions and overall composite. The educational level of the faculty had a statistically significant positive relationship with six of the organizational effectiveness dimensions and the overall composite. The type of governance structure had a statistically significant relationship with the two of the organizational effectiveness dimensions and the overall composite. The stage of transition process indicated statistically significant differences in relation to four effectiveness dimensions and the overall organizational effectiveness composite.

Recommendations for Further Study

As a result of this research, several recommendations are made in the following areas: suggestions for future research, suggestions for the use of Cameron's "Assessment of Organizational Effectiveness in Colleges and Universities" instrument, and suggestions for the specialized colleges of nursing and health sciences. Several of these are cited below:

1. Further study should be conducted to relate the measurement of organizational effectiveness in higher education to the criteria for regional institutional accreditation and program accreditation.
2. Further study should be conducted to compare the perceptions of institutional constituents, such as administrators, faculty, students, and alumni in regards to organizational effectiveness in institutions affiliated with the Specialized Colleges of Nursing and Health Sciences.

3. Further study should be conducted to compare the organizational effectiveness in specialized colleges of nursing to the organizational effectiveness in nursing education programs located within larger universities.

4. The specialized colleges of nursing should endeavor to increase and maintain student enrollments to be of a large enough size to have an impact on organizational effectiveness measures. Of course, the size of the student body will be in relation to the ability to obtain the needed faculty and curricular resources.

5. The specialized colleges of nursing that are currently governed by the medical center or hospital board should work to establish their own governing board, which will have final legal authority for the institution and which will hold the development and maintenance of the institution as of primary importance.

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Chapter 11

NCA

Coordinating the Self-Study Process

CONNECTING
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104th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
April 10-13, 1999 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

And They're Off and Steering: Development of an Effective Steering Committee

Judy A. Jondahl
Norman L. Roberts

A college or university's affiliation with the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Institutions of Higher Education suggests a commitment by an institution to the Commission's principles and a commitment of an institution's time, energy, and resources. The commitment to principles purports an institution's support of values and standards that are the hallmark of American higher education. However, the commitment of time, energy, and resources ratifies the expression of support through an institution's development of programs, policies, and procedures that put into operation the principles. A self-study for accreditation also demonstrates a significant element of an institution's active commitment to affiliation with NCA, one that requires no small measure of time, energy, and resources.

The fate of an institution to produce a thoughtful and critical self-study, which reflects broad participation and analysis by the campus constituency, depends greatly upon the efficacy of the study's steering committee. Easily, one may assume that a comprehensive self-study will consume hundreds of work-hours by an institution's faculty and staff, resulting in the expenditure of thousands of dollars to fund human and physical resources. Through its work, the steering committee defines the wise use of these resources. When actively engaged in the process, the committee significantly affects whether the human and physical resources are effectively and efficiently utilized to produce a self-study that assists an institution in achieving the principles of the Commission. When a steering committee is less than effectively organized and actively engaged, the self-study may easily become an unproductive and superficial review of the status quo, cultivated without the invigoration of a campus broad constituency.

Beginning of the Self-Study at Arizona Western College

Three years before the anticipated visit from NCA, Arizona Western College (AWC) began formulating its plan for conducting a self-study and preparing for the site visit, which constitute the initial phase in the accreditation journey. Through discussion with the College's president and the steering committee's co-chairs, who had been appointed by the president, it was agreed that the primary purpose of conducting a self-study is to promote institutional improvement through a comprehensive, evaluative review of the College. The College's chief administrators recognized and verbalized their understanding and intention that the study not be a mere compendium of the institution's programs and achievements, but that it represent a critical analysis of the institution that could be used for planning purposes. The self-study was recognized as an element of NCA accreditation, but to a greater degree of significance, it was to serve the College in elevating the quality of its programs and services.

Upon establishing the purpose of the self-study for the College, the planning focus shifted to the process necessary to accomplish this result. The primary concern was that there be input from all the constituent groups associated with AWC. Although a self-study may primarily focus on faculty and the direct delivery of instructional services, the College's administration and the steering committee chairs wanted the study to include the broadest constituency possible so that it may reflect a variety of perceptions and insights.

This presentation/paper will describe the process employed to assure the broad-based input desired through direction from an active and effective steering committee.

Broadening the Establishment of the Self-Study's Purposes and Process

Conceptualization of the self-assessment process as a vehicle for both continued NCA accreditation and self-improvement and growth was the first step in the establishment of the process. In addition to the initial discussions between the College's president and the steering co-chairs, further meetings, which included the College's executive council and institutional research staff, promoted a more broadly defined set of purposes and processes to achieve the preliminary purposes. Based upon these discussions, the following purposes for the AWC self-study process were identified:

- to provide an assessment of AWC's strengths, accomplishments, and concerns;
- to provide a basis for strengthening the planning process for the future of AWC;
- to identify issues that may have fallen between lines of responsibility;
- to provide an opportunity for faculty and staff involvement in the future of the institution;
- to assist in meeting eligibility requirements for the awarding of student financial aid and receiving federal funding.

These purposes provided the direction for development of a charge to the steering committee. This charge was *to promote college and community-wide participation in the self-study process by serving as liaisons between administration, faculty, staff, governing board members, and the community served by Arizona Western College.*

The role of the steering committee was further defined as being responsible for:

- making critical decisions regarding the membership of the subcommittees,
- approving actions of those subcommittees through a review of their findings,
- assuring political neutrality of the self-study,
- providing direction to the subcommittee co-chairs, and
- assisting in the writing of sections of the self-study.

It was expected that one of the greatest challenges the steering committee would encounter would be to assure that the self-study process, including the critical data collection and analysis, proceeded in a timely manner. Because neither the steering committee nor the members of the subcommittees would be granted "release" time to work on the self-study, the matter of timely progress on the self-study was identified as a significant challenge. This did not mean that employees would not be allowed to attend subcommittee meetings nor do other self-study projects during working hours; however, all of this would be in addition to their normal work assignments.

With these constraints in mind, a timeline was established by the steering committee co-chairs for approval by the full steering committee. In developing the timeline, consideration was given to the limitations committee members would be faced with in completing the self-study and meeting their regular work assignments. Providing a sufficient and appropriate interval for the subcommittees to do their work, without compromising the quality of the self-study, was critical.

(Workshop attendees will be provided with a copy of the timeline as approved by the steering committee.)

Establishment of the Steering Committee

Since a goal of the self-study process was to have broad representation from all constituent groups involved in the self-study process, i.e., the campus community, it was important to have representatives from both faculty and staff on the steering committee. With this in mind, *candidate-criteria* were established for selection of the steering committee.

Qualifications for membership included:

- good critical thinking skills
- respected by peers
- good group participants
- "do'ers"–individuals who would do the work expected
- those without an ax to grind

To reflect the composition of the campus, membership of the steering committee was to consider:

- Employee status: classified staff, professional/administrative staff, faculty, and associate faculty
- Operational area: instruction, student services, and business office
- Instructional divisions: vocational and academic
- Length of service: short and long term employees
- Gender: male and female
- Ethnic Diversity: proportional to College demographics

With these criteria established, the number of steering committee members needed to be determined. In the course of discussion regarding committee size, the proposed size of the committee ranged from seven to fourteen. Not wanting to be capricious about the decision, the co-chairs considered central issues related to committee size. These issues included concerns that:

- the committee be sufficiently large to provide for broad campus representation;
- the number of members allow for adequate distribution of work, i.e., that too few members would not be overloaded with the steering committee tasks;
- the committee size allow for workable scheduling of meetings; and
- the number of members not impair the group's ability to conduct vibrant dialogue.

It was assumed that a somewhat smaller committee, sufficient in number to meet the demands of shepherding the self-study process, would be the best option. As a consequence, the co-chairs, with agreement by the College's president, decided on a committee of seven, including the committee's co-chairs.

Based on the *candidate-criteria,* individuals who were recommended or expressed interest in serving on the steering committee were evaluated by use of a grid to assess the candidates and ensure the broad representation desired. (Session attendees will receive a copy of the *candidate criteria grid instrument.)* Primary responsibility for recommending candidates for the steering committee was given to the College's vice-presidents, deans, and division chairs. However, through the use of campus e-mail, an open invitation was provided the campus community to seek participation on the steering committee. Candidates, recommended and self-volunteered, were evaluated by the co-chairs using the criteria grid. Based upon the results of the analysis and evaluation of candidates, the members of the committee were selected and the College's president issued letters to the selected candidates inviting them to serve on the committee and expressing his commitment to the process.

The result of the selection process for AWC, using the criteria grid, was a committee comprised of four faculty, two professional/administrative personnel, and one classified staff member. Faculty represented the divisions of math and science; human services; communications; and modern languages. The professional/administrative and classified staff appointed were from counseling, off-campus services, and business services. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness also served on the committee as a resource.

Once the members of the steering committee were identified and had accepted appointment to the steering committee, an orientation session was held to acquaint them with the purposes of North Central accreditation; the process, roles, and responsibilities of the various people who would be involved; the organization of the self-study; and each of the criteria upon which Arizona Western College would be assessed. A proposed timetable was discussed and adopted. Each of the members was challenged to identify resources from which information related to the criteria could be found and to select the criterion upon which he or she would most like to concentrate.

Establishing Criterion Subcommittees

Using the criteria as a basis for preliminary organization of the subcommittees, the steering committee set out on the journey to select subcommittee members in Spring 1997, two years before the anticipated site team visit. In this stage of the process, the committee first determined the evidence needed to support each criterion and then identified resources, human and non-human, which could provide the evidence. At this point, no names had been included in the discussion; however, from this preliminary work the steering committee identified human resources by employment status or relationship to the College but still not by persons' names. (Session attendees will be provided with samples of the grids developed in this process.)

The next stage of the process during the Spring of 1997 involved the converting of unnamed human resources into "real people" assigned to specific criterion subcommittees. Because the steering committee membership included representation from across the campus, nominations for criterion subcommittees reflected diversity of campus divisions or departments and employment status, i.e., faculty, professional/administrative and classified staff, as well as nominations of students and District Governing Board members. Broad representation on the subcommittees was an automatic consequence of the steering committee's broad composition.

In addition to selecting the members for each of the criterion subcommittees, the steering committee was faced with the challenge of identifying co-chairs within the subcommittees. In considering the potential candidates for co-chairs from all the nominated subcommittee members, the selection process continued to consider a broad mix of cross-campus participation. It did not escape the committee, however, that subcommittee chairs, if they were to exercise appropriate leadership of their committees, would need to be those who tended to be recognized as leaders by their peers, either by position within the campus community or by the nature of their personalities. The need to have persons of leadership quality did not cause the committee to lose sight of other qualities, such as organizational skills, consensus building, and demonstrated writing proficiency. Following the discussion and selection of committee members and the co-chairs, the College's president sent invitations to those recommended for service on each of the subcommittees.

Guidance to the Criterion Subcommittees

While awaiting acceptances for the subcommittee positions, the steering committee headed down the path of developing the charge for each subcommittee. This was done through the development of study guides for each subcommittee. The guides presented the charge, questions to be answered, evidence to be addressed, and potential resources for collection of data.

Each steering committee member served as a liaison to one of the subcommittees and prepared a draft of the guide. These guides were reviewed and revised by the steering committee to identify potential areas of overlap and to avoid omission of any area the committee felt was critical to study. (Attendees will be provided with examples of the study guides in their handouts.)

In May 1997, the co-chairs of each subcommittee were provided an orientation to the self-study process and the AWC plan for accomplishing the desired comprehensive evaluative study. This orientation covered the areas that had been addressed in the steering committee orientation, plus a look at the study guides for each subcommittee and the proposed format for the completed study. The Director of Institutional Research also presented an overview of the data currently available and invited the subcommittees to provide her with requests for other data by November 1997. In fall 1997 the full subcommittees were oriented by their steering committee liaison and the co-chairs. Thus, the journey to data collection and analysis began.

One of the supportive activities of the steering committee at that point was to use the grid sheets that identified non-human resources and place those documents in a Resource Room where the subcommittees could meet and have access to the data. The items in this Resource Room expanded as subcommittees identified additional resources they felt valuable to completing their work. As the resources grew, the steering committee realized the need to organize these data and began seeing it as an important part of the area designated for the visitors to use while on campus.

Establishing and Maintaining Steering Committee Energy

Since most of the Criteria for Accreditation do not stand alone but have some areas of overlap or interdependence, communication between the subcommittees was critical. This was the role of the steering committee liaisons to each subcommittee. The steering committee met regularly to share the work of each subcommittee and identify overlaps and gaps. The liaisons returned to the subcommittees with further direction based on the steering committee recommendations.

As the research, discussion, and writing by the criterion subcommittees began to unfold, it was immediately recognized that having a meeting of the subcommittee co-chairs with the steering committee was crucial to enhance communication and clarify issues that were arising from among all subcommittees. This meeting format was a major success and was repeated until journey's end.

Evaluating the Work of the Subcommittees

Once the preliminary drafts from the subcommittees were completed and in the hands of the steering committees, a special weekend meeting of the steering committee was convened. Such a meeting required a rolled-up-sleeve attitude and dedication to provide time and energy outside the regular office hours, but it also allowed for a concentrated effort in evaluating the preliminary subcommittee drafts.

With an outline of the criteria and the patterns of evidence recommended by the Commission in hand, two members of the steering committee, including the Director of Institutional Research, were assigned to read through two criterion reports. The duo was to evaluate the success of the report in addressing the particular criterion, particularly as evidenced in the patterns of evidence. Some thought was given to clarity of expression and report organization, but the primary concern was the effectiveness of the report to respond to the demands of the Commission's criteria. From this weekend marathon experience, criterion subcommittees were provided notes and recommendations to improve upon their reports.

Steering Committees—Upon Reflection

The use of the term "steering" to represent the work of a steering committee should not be underappreciated in the preparation of a self-study or as part of the journey toward accreditation. If an institution intends to allow for broad constituency participation in the preparation of its self-study, it can only achieve an effective effort and viable document through an actively engaged steering committee. Without an effective and active steering committee, the process may become much like the worn but apt metaphor about one's effort to, "herd kittens." While an effective steering committee allows for great latitude, creativity, and energy within the criterion subcommittees, it also provides the boundaries, guidance, and central direction that avoids self-study disintegration, chaos, or collapse during the institutional accreditation journey.

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Becoming Your Own Taskmaster: A Template for Integrating Elements of the Self-Study

James Croonquist
Thomas von Gunden

As your institution moves through the self-study process, it will want to follow closely the guidelines in the NCA *Handbook of Accreditation*. An essential source for mapping and monitoring the process, the *Handbook* outlines the basic steps and requirements for a thorough, focused self-study. As we discovered in conducting the self-study on the Minot State University campus, the process of incorporating the suggestions from various sections of the NCA *Handbook* is made easier if the institution works from a planning template. The template that emerged from our self-study shows the side-by-side integration of what we determined to be the five key elements of the process: *timeline, tasks, responsible person(s), NCA Handbook, and outcomes/documentation.* The Minot State planning template is displayed in Figure 1.1.

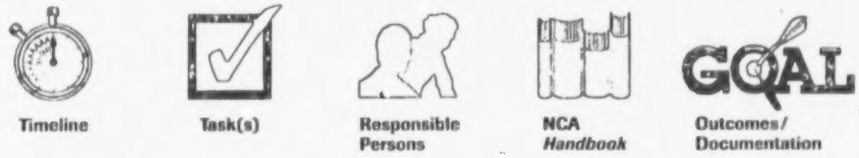

Figure 1.1 Minot State University Planning Template—Format Only

The Minot State template reflects a crucial observation we made about using the sample timeline in the NCA *Handbook* (pp. 137-38). While the sample timeline includes a list of suggested stages and tasks, it does not specify which *Handbook* sections to target at each stage, for each task. Consequently, the institution is invited to decide, for each stage and task, how it will organize resources, which NCA requirements it will target and reference, and how it will document self-study activities. By putting information from different sections of the *Handbook* into "shorthand" form, a planning template provides a "quick-scan" or an "at a glance" overview of particular self-study stages and tasks. Hence, the template serves as a comprehensive checklist for organizing and prioritizing activities at each step of the way. The Self-Study Coordinator as well as subcommittee chairs can use this checklist to ensure that, stage-by-stage during the self-study process, all five elements are integrated.

In order to understand why the five elements of the template should be integrated, it is useful to consider what each entails:

◇ **Timeline.** A timeline reflects the need to be always moving towards closure: closure in planning the self-study, closure in doing the self-study, and closure in writing the Self-Study Report. Maintaining timelines encourages participants to complete tasks and provides a "light at the end of the tunnel" for those fatiguing from the process. A timeline provides structure and delineates benchmarks for progress during the self-study process.

In two important places, the NCA *Handbook* offers help in maintaining timelines. First, the sample timeline provides an important framework from which to build activities necessary for completing tasks. Second, the tasks themselves are further clarified in Chapter Five. Thus, the *Handbook* emphasizes timelines and tasks as the foundation for constructing expanded, individualized models or templates for focusing the process and keeping it on pace. One such individualized model is the Minot State template.

- **Tasks.** Tasks and timelines go hand-in-glove. Timelines link the planning process from beginning to end; tasks delineate what needs to be done at each stage in the drive towards closure. As the institution weaves the general guidelines in the *Handbook* to its individualized approach to the self-study, tasks become more precise. Broad tasks are broken down into smaller assignments undertaken by various participants in the self-study process. That means that, with each assignment, those involved in the self-study need to understand the links between NCA guidelines and their own campus-specific efforts. For example, if a committee is working on the task of documenting compliance with a certain General Institutional Requirement (GIR), it must (1) determine what the GIR does, in fact, require, and (2) review the institutional evidence to identify which pieces best illustrate compliance. As a general rule-of-thumb, the more clearly the task is defined according to guidelines in the *Handbook*, the better the result.

- **Responsible person(s).** In addition to being connected to a timeline and linked to NCA guidelines, each task must be assigned to a responsible person or team. No other part of the self-study process is more important than the role played by the individuals who gather evidence and draft reports. The integrity and validity of the overall self-study process depends totally on sustained commitment from those chosen to do the work.

  Participants who assume responsibilities as team chairs in the self-study process need direction and mentoring from the Self-Study Coordinator and the Steering Committee. They also must be willing to lead their teams in accomplishing the assigned tasks within the given timelines. The Self-Study Coordinator should schedule regular meetings with team chairs and writers, determine their progress and needs, and offer assistance. The Coordinator should make it clear that they are entrusted with getting the job done, and he/she should encourage them to meet regularly with their teams and stay focused on the timelines.

- **NCA *Handbook*.** Every self-study process should start with a thorough examination of the NCA *Handbook of Accreditation*. A consistent theme of this paper is the foundational nature of that document. The Minot State template is based primarily on the suggestions and recommendations found throughout the *Handbook*. Self-Study Coordinators should not make the mistake of discovering the *Handbook* midway through the process.

  For new Self-Study Coordinators at the beginning of the process, special attention should be given to the previously cited sections and to those sections focused on the General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) and the Criteria for Accreditation. The institution must determine early how it will collect, organize, and report documentation of compliance with the GIRs and Criteria. This decision is crucial to the success of the self-study process. The *Handbook* is particularly helpful in that it cross-references the Criteria with the GIRs (p. 27). Self-study coordinators should use that page as a guideline for organizing evidence-collection and for relating the Criteria and GIRs in the Self-Study Report.

- **Outcomes/documentation.** As shown on the Minot State template, the fifth key element of the process involves reporting outcomes and documenting evidence. From the beginning of the self-study process, committees should maintain a log of agendas, keep minutes of meetings, and record discussion points that will contribute to the draft of the subcommittees' findings.

  In addition to keeping records of their progress, subcommittees should help in collecting and organizing documents so as to contribute to the consistency and clarity of the Self-Study Report. Hundreds of types of information will surface during the outcomes/documentation process. If teams are charged with locating and prioritizing evidence of compliance with GIRs and Criteria, then other staff can be cataloguing those documents in a resource room as they are submitted.

Who Should Participate in the Self-Study Process?

NCA explicitly requires the participation of multiple constituencies and a representative body of campus people in the self-study process (pp. 73-74). This requirement has a direct impact on the design of the overall self-study process. Forget any notions of one or two people writing a self-study report in isolation. Site teams expect wide-spread campus involvement in the self-study and will seek to determine if the campus has met this expectation. The *Handbook* clearly suggests the formation of multiple subcommittees. Minot State's response to the need for wide-spread participation was to establish working teams to collect evidence and documentation; to make presentations to faculty, staff, students, alumni, the local Board of Regents, and the community in general; and to survey those groups and, thus, involve them in the process. Our institution had seven years of strategic planning documentation as well that provided evidence of multiple participation by various constituencies.

Team Selection

Minot State established five working teams (6-8 members per team). Each team had a leader responsible for calling meetings and establishing the working agenda. Another team member was responsible for maintaining a log and writing the draft report at the end of the team process. The team leaders reported to the Self-Study Coordinator, who then discussed issues with other members of the Steering Committee (President, Dean of Institutional Planning, and one faculty member).

The team process initially involved establishing criteria for selection, matching tasks with the available talent pool, and determining the availability of desired team members in relation to their current loads. Some members were selected because of their organizational skills. Others were selected because of their leadership skills. Still others were selected because they were seen as people who get things done. The intent of the process was to choose persons capable of working together and of identifying issues that positively and negatively affect the institution.

There was no attempt to exclude anyone. Rather, those faculty and staff not chosen to serve on teams were provided opportunities to comment on the process through campus meetings and surveys. The same opportunities were provided to students, alumni, and others, as previously mentioned.

Establishing teams contributed greatly to the overall self-study process. The teams worked hard, met regularly, identified issues, provided documentation, and stayed on course throughout the process. They represented the institution well during the team visit, answering specific questions and clearly identifying the processes used to form the conclusions in the Self-Study Report.

The Team Process: An Example of the Planning Template in Action

Once teams or subcommittees have been organized, they obviously need to focus their efforts. The sample timeline in the NCA *Handbook* suggests that subcommittees work during the period of 18-24 months before the visit and that they "gather data, interview, analyze, and develop draft reports" (p. 137). But what, exactly, should they do? How should they document their efforts? As noted above and reflected on the sample templates below, we decided that a productive way of defining our teams' tasks was to use Chapter Three on General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) and Chapter Four on Criteria for Accreditation (Figure 1.2). Hence, we distributed the five criteria and related GIRs among five subcommittees (with Criterion Three subdivided for two committees). For instance, one of our teams focused on Criterion Two, dealing with human, financial, and physical resources, and on related GIRs 9-11 and 19-21, also dealing with resources (Figure 1.3). Because the *Handbook* chapter on criteria includes suggested "patterns of evidence" for supporting each criterion, the teams' efforts in gathering data were productively focused from the outset.

18-24 months before visit	Gather data, interview, analyze, and develop draft reports	Subcommittees (Teams)	Chapters 3 & 4: p. 137	Teams work with GIRs and criteria

Figure 1.2 Minot State University Planning Template–Initial Team Assignments

18-24 months before visit	Focus on Criterion 2 Human, financial, and fiscal resources	Team 2	GIRs 9-11, 19-21 (pp. 21-22); Criterion 2 (pp. 35-40)	Document the evidence; Write the draft

Figure 1.3 Minot State University Planning Template–Team Two, Task One

It is in this gathering and analyzing process that team or subcommittee representation becomes crucial. For example, the aforementioned Minot State team looking at human, financial, and physical resources consisted of faculty from three different academic departments as well as staff from student services and the business office. Their varied roles and responsibilities on campus meant that the team had access to a wide range of evidence supporting the criterion and GIRs at hand.

As noted above, the NCA *Handbook* suggests six months for subcommittee efforts during the self-study. We affirm that suggestion. The strength of a good subcommittee or team process—pulling together representatives from varied parts of the campus—also creates a demand for time. Because membership is necessarily varied, subcommittees need time not only to gather data, but also to understand and negotiate the perspectives that members from different parts of the campus bring to the analysis. They also need time to draft reports, particularly as they work toward drawing conclusions about the patterns of evidence and about the institution's strengths and challenges in regard to particular criteria.

Conclusion

For new Self-Study Coordinators, the self-study process can initially seem to be a daunting, unmanageable endeavor. However, as our model illustrates, the process can be effectively focused if Self-Study Coordinators involve the campus in consistently targeting and integrating the five key elements (timeline, tasks, responsible persons, NCA *Handbook*, outcomes/documentation). In our example of team involvement, the process was initiated by the suggested timeline and tasks in the NCA *Handbook* (elements one and two). Responsible, representative working teams were formed (element three). Their efforts were connected to NCA guidelines by way of the *Handbook* chapters on criteria and GIRs (element four). In addition, they were documented in agendas and minutes from team meetings and in the criteria sections of the final self-study report (element five).

A five-part, integrated planning template helps to keep the self-study process moving toward closure. Because the template is built around timelines and tasks, it is usefully goal-driven. And, because it draws attention to the NCA *Handbook* and to the need for documentation, the template ensures that the ultimate "product" of the process, the self-study report, not only identifies issues of importance to the campus, but also speaks clearly and directly to the standards for accreditation. Most importantly, perhaps, the template reminds the institution to involve people. By broadening the definition of *responsible person(s)* to include teams and by inviting reflection and response from all campus constituencies, Self-Study Coordinators underscore a commitment to local ownership of the process.

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Organizing the Steering Committee and Its Work

Linda R. Lindsay
Sandra Harley

Perspective

Davenport College is an independent, multi-campus college that has prepared people for careers in business and industry for more than 130 years. College enrollment (fall 1998) is just under 7500, with students taking classes on ten campuses and through the growing virtual learning network. While each campus serves traditional age learners, the average student age is 32. Thus, working adult learners make up the majority of the population.

The essence of the college's mission reflects an entrepreneurial spirit that grounds the institution and infuses a binding theme—and also provides the challenge for change in a rapidly evolving technological and global world. Over the past decade, while business programs remain the college's largest, allied health and legal studies programs have developed and grown, and varied delivery systems have provided new means of learning for students.

Preparing for a Comprehensive Visit

The formal self-study process began in July 1996 with the appointment of a self-study staff that included the vice president of academic affairs, the college's instructional design coordinator, and a faculty member with expertise in editing and technical skills. Committed to broad inclusion, the college leaders assembled a steering committee that included representatives from each of the ten campuses, as well as broad functional areas. In addition, a service committee of people with planning, research, and technical skills was selected to support the work of the Steering Committee.

Nine subcommittees studied distinct areas of the College that would fit into the five Criteria for Accreditation; a member of the Steering Committee chaired each subcommittee. Altogether more than 75 faculty and staff members served in direct capacities as data gatherers and writers, and well over 200 additional staff members, faculty (full-time and adjunct), and students read, reacted to, and made suggestions for change during the analysis and documentation process.

The highly complex nature of Davenport College required a self-study plan with significant organizational and management processes in order to document, communicate, and educate the college community throughout the process. Additionally, the president and the College's management team were committed to involving the total college community, as much as possible, in a reflective and accurate look at the institution's strengths and challenges and to using the results as an important opportunity for increasing institutional effectiveness. Linking the self-study findings to the strategic planning process was one concrete way to be certain this goal was met.

Organizing Tools of the Self-Study Process

Four main tools helped organize the college's self-study process to gain broad involvement of stakeholders around a continuous improvement model that could be integrated into the strategic planning process.

- ◇ **Determining the strategic direction.** Clarifying and articulating the unifying theme of the self-study early in the process helped develop the resolve needed for the long road ahead. The theme, "dynamic institutional change," seemed to rise out of the refocused vision and mission that were near completion during the early period of the self-study process. Articulating this theme gave the organizational tools a logical and contextual framework for the process of analysis.

- ◇ **Providing an organizational framework.** Organizing the work of the Steering Committee using modified project management concepts and a clear timeline of work completed and work in progress led to a "beginning to end" design divided into four phases. (Handouts related to the Four Phases will be available at the session.) Early identification made it possible to see the logical progression of steps and to celebrate progressive "small wins" along the way.

- ◇ **Turning each meeting into a work session.** Given the challenge of gathering Steering Committee members from multiple locations spanning several hundred miles, it was important that time be leveraged effectively when the group was called together. By dividing the work into the Four Phases leading to the finished result, each Steering Committee meeting became a focused work session designed to complete one phase and to begin the next. Expected outcomes of each session were communicated and distributed well in advance of the meetings and distributed along with the agenda and supporting materials. Sessions began and ended at agreed upon times. (Materials related to the phases with specific examples will be available as handouts.) In this way, a rather small committee was able to create a ripple effect throughout the institution. In the extended time periods in between the large Steering Committee meetings, subcommittee meetings, phone, fax, and e-mail conversations, as well as newsletters, added to the communication process.

- ◇ **Communication by multiple means.** Too much communication is probably not possible during the self-study process, but by making communication a high priority and a defined phase of the self-study process, much attention was given to finding and using multiple means. The use of the College's e-mail and Intranet technology made it possible to expand communication opportunities for input and feedback from a broad range of students, faculty, staff, and other college stakeholders. Using the document as a means of discussion and communication with the total college community of more than 900 employees on ten campuses was a significant opportunity for communication. A compiled summary document was given to each employee, and copies were made available to students. Students were also invited to write responses describing their experiences at campuses of the College, and more than 50 such descriptions became a part of the Resource Room exhibits for the visit.

Results

The value of the self-study process and the College's resultant opportunities to use the results for communication and dialog as well as continuous improvement has been significant. The reflective and analytical nature of the process resulted in a highly successful visit, where the strengths and challenges determined by the institutional analysis were clearly in line with those identified by the visiting team. Further strategic planning development has resulted in the incorporation of all strengths, concerns, and challenges into the college's ongoing commitment to greater institutional effectiveness.

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The Self-Study Process from Alpha to Omega

Doreene Ward Alexander

Overview

New Mexico State University (NMSU) is the land-grant institution for the State of New Mexico. Founded in 1888, NMSU is a comprehensive university dedicated to teaching, research, extension education, and service. It is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a Research I University and holds more than $300 million in grants and contracts. The United States Department of Education, under Title III of the Higher Education Act, has designated NMSU a minority institution. NMSU has also been designated as a Hispanic serving institution. During the Fall 1998 semester, student headcount enrollment at the main campus was 15,409. Of the enrolled students, 11,891 were in-state, 2,936 were out-of-state, and 582 were classified as international. The university offers both graduate and undergraduate programs. The Graduate School offers 50 areas of study at the master's level, four areas at the specialist in education level, and 24 at the doctoral level. The six undergraduate colleges–Agriculture and Home Economics, Arts and Sciences, Business Administration and Economics, Education, Engineering, and Health and Social Services–offer 74 areas of study. This same semester, full and part-time faculty numbered 896, professional staff numbered 1,027, and 1,466 classified staff.

Purpose

This paper will introduce the self-study process undertaken by NMSU over the four-year period preceding a North Central Association (NCA) site visit and a recommendation for continued accreditation, thus from beginning to end. Components to be considered include: development of the self-study infrastructure; administrative support; constituent participation; internal program review; evaluation of the self-study process; the site visit; the review team report, Commission action and its dissemination.

The Beginning

The NMSU institutional review process is one component of an overall university commitment to the provision of a quality education for students and residents of New Mexico and surrounding areas. This institutional review process was built on the efforts established in preparation for the last (1988) NCA review. The preparation for the 1998 accreditation review began in August of 1994 with the appointment of a Self-Study Coordinator. The executive vice president appointed a steering committee that included representation from the Graduate School, each of the six academic colleges, two branch campuses (Doña Ana and Grants), nonacademic support areas, and the student body. The Vice President for Administration chaired the steering committee.

The steering committee worked together closely with members serving on subcommittees, participating in working meetings, serving on review teams, and functioning as resources to their respective home units. Steering committee members assumed an active responsibility in oversight efforts of the process.

Responding to New Criteria and Policy

Since the previous reaccreditation (1988) NCA had expanded the evaluation criteria from four to five, added a policy regarding third party comment, and emphasized the evaluative rather than descriptive nature of the self-study process and report. Each of these changes required thoughtful discussion and contemplation prior to implementation. The steering committee was a major asset in providing guidance for the forward movement of the tasks at hand. In some instances responding to the NCA changes required only the modification of existing strategies while others necessitated the development of new approaches.

Internal Review Process

The initial work of the steering committee and coordinator revolved around the revision of internal academic program review guidelines and the development of nonacademic (support) program review guidelines. This interactive process sought input from faculty and appropriate professional and classified staff, followed by review and comment from associate deans, deans, vice presidents, and executive administrators. Concurrent with the development of the guidelines was the identification of a time line that grouped both academic and nonacademic departments/programs into specific semesters for participation in the program review process. The five semesters assigned were Spring 1995 through Spring 1997. During each of these semesters, between 10 and 14 academic departments/programs were engaged in program review. Nonacademic department/program reviews varied in number between two and seven per semester.

The self-study process consisted of a self-analysis by each department/program, a review of the department/program by a review team, and an exit meeting to examine both the self-analysis and the report of the review team. Throughout the program review process, a major emphasis was placed on involving the greatest number of people possible representing all relevant components of the institution. An initial step was to meet with academic and nonacademic administrators and provide them with an orientation to the program review process. Department heads and directors also received orientation and guidance. The Self-Study Coordinator was identified as the facilitator of the process as well as an available resource person. Department heads were asked to involve faculty and staff in the self-review. Sixty-three academic departments/programs and their respective faculties and staffs were involved. Fifty-seven units and their staffs represented the nonacademic areas.

Upon completion of the internal site visit, the internal review team wrote a report responding to six primary questions. For both academic and nonacademic departments, the culmination of the process was an exit meeting to discuss the results of the review process and to consider actions/activities to improve the department/program.

Evaluation of the Self-Study Process

An evaluation of the self-study process itself was also undertaken. This evaluation was both formative and summative in nature. Each semester participants, from department heads to review team members, were asked to evaluate the review experience. The formative component allowed appropriate revisions in the process to be completed prior to implementation of the next semester. Summative feedback aided in the anticipated development and implementation of a periodic program review model.

The majority of the academic and nonacademic department heads/directors stated that the program review process served as a catalyst for insightful examination and evaluation. Several persons serving as review team chairs indicated that the process allowed them to become familiar with another component of the university and to have an opportunity to contribute their expertise as peer evaluators. A great majority of those serving as team members, including faculty, staff, and students, found the experience to be both educational and informative.

The Self-Study Report, Site Visit, and NCA Report

The Self-Study Report submitted to NCA documented the efforts of the institutional process and served as the basis for the site visit. NMSU's Self-Study Report used the five NCA criteria as a structural framework. Included in this one volume were the responses to the General Institutional Requirements, the five criteria, the Basic Institutional Data forms, and supporting appendices. An evaluative approach was integrated throughout the document.

The structure of the document became the format for the organization of the site visit as well as the NCA team report. The site visit proved to be a dynamic opportunity for the interaction between the site visitors and the members of the campus community. The site visitors were professional in carrying out their roles and responsibilities. As consultants, the members readily shared their knowledge and expertise. The draft team report was received by the president for review and assurance that factual information was correct before the final Team Report was submitted to NCA and forwarded to the President.

Commission Recommendation for Reaccreditation

The university president received notification of Commission action for continued accreditation by mail. Working with University Communications, he made the recommendation available to the university and general communities. Press releases distributed to the newspapers and an e-mail notice disseminated the recommendation in a timely manner to the university.

Summary

In summary, this paper has provided a very broad overview of the process undertaken by NMSU in conducting its institutional self-study. This introduction will be expanded upon and greater detail will be provided during the workshop.

Conclusions

The process of seeking reaccreditation is one that allowed NMSU to clearly emphasize its focus on the provision of quality education for its students. The self-study process complemented many of the forms of ongoing examination and evaluation already in place. One major benefit of the process was the involvement of persons from all areas of the university as well as the community. Another was the peer consultation provided by the NCA site visitors.

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Conducting a Successful and Rewarding Self-Study

Janice Elias
Bege Bowers

At the end of the NCA team's exit report at Youngstown State University, faculty, staff, students, and board members broke into applause. Members of the Self-Study Committee were particularly proud that a strength cited by the team was "involving effectively all campus constituencies" in the self-study process. You, too, can lead a successful and rewarding self-study by developing a plan, communicating a vision, involving the right people, and providing them with sufficient resources and rewards. You can anticipate challenges and meet unexpected ones as well. Our suggestions can help you look forward to the team's visit with confidence.

Vision

Many individuals at your institution will know little about regional accreditation. Some will see it as a necessary evil, not as a valuable process. To motivate enthusiastic cooperation, you must educate the campus community about NCA and the purposes, process, and value of accreditation.

You can underscore this importance in a variety of ways. We published an article about the value of accreditation in the employee newsletter before asking individuals to serve on committees. Contacts with the student newspaper resulted in several articles during the two-year self-study. The Self-Study Coordinator addressed groups such as the Academic Senate, Student Government, the academic department chairpersons, and the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees. Repeatedly, we emphasized that the most important part of the process was not earning the external stamp of approval, but the intrinsic value of campus-wide dialogue about substantive issues.

Planning

A self-study should involve many members of the university community, but a small group is more effective in making the initial plans. Our planning group, consisting of the Self-Study Coordinator, the editor, and two deans who are NCA Consultant-Evaluators, began work more than two years before the site visit. The Self-Study Coordinator discussed the accreditation process with the President, Provost, Council of Deans, and President's Cabinet. From these early discussions, we developed a self-study plan outlining purposes of the self-study, a timetable, a committee structure, and individuals to serve on the committees.

Personnel

As Coordinator, you must identify the skills needed to conduct the self-study, produce the report, and coordinate the visit. You will need to perform or assign hundreds of tasks, ranging from choosing typeface to picking up visiting team members at the airport. You will need to interact with dozens of individuals, such as an editor, study committees, layout and production experts, support staff, and the institution's executive and governing leadership. What is your role, and what are the responsibilities of other individuals?

◇ **Editor.** We decided to have a Self-Study Coordinator and an editor share leadership of the project from the beginning. The Assistant Provost for Academic Planning was named Coordinator; a professor from the

Professional Writing and Editing program was selected as editor. Our different perspectives—one administrative, the other faculty—and our complementary strengths (such as skill in facilitating groups and expertise in writing) created an effective leadership team.

If you choose to have both a coordinator and an editor, clarify the responsibilities of each. Rely on the editor's expertise in developing style guidelines, selecting word-processing software, helping to plan the document, editing copy, and communicating with layout and production personnel. An editor will be invaluable for blending material written by many different individuals into a document that speaks with one voice. Most important, believe the editor when she or he indicates how much time final editing, layout, printing, proofreading, and binding will take!

- **Committee members.** It is important to include diverse sectors of the university on the Steering Committee and study committees. Effective involvement means casting the net both wide and deep, cutting across divisions and colleges and selecting people from different levels of the organization. In addition, the individuals must be reliable, able and willing to contribute time, and good team players. Open-mindedness and the ability to listen are probably more important than writing skills.

- **Committee structure.** We identified eight committees: one for each of the five criteria, one for federal compliance, one for both General Institutional Requirements and exhibits, and one for the introductory material, including responses to the concerns of the previous team. Each committee had approximately 10 members representing a cross-section of the university, including a student. Ten seems large but allows for attrition. Think carefully about what expertise and perspectives are most useful for each committee. For example, a committee assigned to examine human, physical, and financial resources needs members who clearly understand these subjects. The most knowledgeable people are probably those responsible for administration and operation of those areas. However, they may be too close to the situation to see problems and reluctant to identify concerns. You need a mix of individuals, including those with a more objective, external perspective.

  Also consider the communication networks of committee members. All of our committees had at least one individual from each of the four divisions of the university. Each member of the Academic Senate's Academic Planning Committee served on a different committee. Co-chairs headed each of the eight committees and represented their committees on the Steering Committee. For most committees, the co-chair system worked well. However, if you choose to have co-chairs, you may find that neither assumes leadership. A chair and vice-chair or an alternate structure might more clearly define who is responsible.

  Combining responsibility for the General Institutional Requirements chapter and the exhibit room worked particularly well. The committee completed the GIR section early in the process and then turned its attention to the supporting exhibits. We were fortunate to have a librarian co-chair this committee.

  In retrospect, we did not need a separate committee for federal compliance; this topic could have been assigned to another committee. There was also a great deal of overlap between the work of the Introduction Committee and that of the five criteria committees. The committees were investigating the same topics in relation to the previous team's concerns and to the criteria. We suggest assigning each of the previous accreditation concerns to the related criterion committee and then deciding how to address the concerns in the introduction.

- **Steering Committee.** In addition to committee co-chairs, two alumni and a student also served on the Steering Committee. Through careful selection of co-chairs, the four divisions of the university and each of the six colleges were represented. Though the Steering Committee was large, size did not seem to be a problem. Usually, at least one co-chair from each committee could attend and represent the committee.

- **Production.** Determine early in the process whether layout, design, and printing can be done in-house, who will be responsible, and when it can be scheduled. Leave time for proofreading and making corrections—and try to avoid a last-minute rush.

- **Executive leadership.** The CEO and vice presidents will probably not be members of your self-study committees. However, your interaction with them is vitally important for several reasons. First, they have broad institutional knowledge that can inform your analysis. Second, the visiting team will have extensive discussions with them to verify conclusions of the self-study. Strong differences of opinion between the executive leadership and the self-study committees will raise questions about the validity of the self-study. Third, your report will have more value if recommendations are followed by action. Committees that produce reports often complain that their recommendations are not implemented. When the CEO and other executives are engaged in the dialogue and generally supportive of the conclusions, real change is more likely to occur.

◇ **Governing board.** Discuss with your CEO the best methods for keeping the board informed. We reported at each quarterly meeting of the board's Academic Affairs Committee during the self-study. Because board members will also meet with the visiting team they need to understand strengths and weaknesses that emerge from the self-study. They are likely to be particularly interested in any issue that has public-relations implications.

Rewards and Resources

Your colleagues have many claims on their time and energy. Launch your self-study by giving them confidence that what they are doing is important and appreciated. The President should formally appoint committee members with a letter copied to the appointees' supervisors. The President attended our first Steering Committee meeting to express his appreciation and support. At the beginning of the second academic year of the self-study process, committee members received thank-you notes that were copied to their supervisors. We made meetings pleasant and organized. We provided refreshments occasionally. We expressed praise and appreciation often. Finally, we celebrated the successful conclusion of the process with a party and thank-you letters for approximately 150 people who had significantly contributed to the effort.

To facilitate the work of the committees, we established a workroom in the library for documents such as the previous Self-Study Report, institutional catalogs, the university fact book, union contracts, and the budget. As this collection grew, it formed the basis for the exhibit room. Access to a copier was nearby. The room would have been even more useful if it had been large enough for committee meetings.

Conducting the Self-Study

As Self-Study Coordinator, you must balance leading and listening. The committee members should own the process and the product. On the other hand, as busy people with many responsibilities, they will resent disorganization or lack of direction. We managed our self-study through the following steps.

◇ **Steering Committee orientation.** At our first Steering Committee meeting, we distributed a notebook of reference material to each member. It included the self-study plan, committee structure, and draft purposes of the self-study developed by the planning committee. It also included the Criteria for Accreditation, the concerns of the previous visiting team, sample tables of contents from other self-studies, a list of reference materials, and a style sheet developed by the editor. Each committee chair received some material specific to the committee's assigned topic.

◇ **Workshop.** The second activity was a workshop conducted with the help of our NCA staff liaison. All 80 committee members as well as the institutional leadership were invited to the opening session led by Cecilia López, "What North Central Expects of You, and What You Can Expect of North Central." Packets were distributed to all committee members, who then met for the first time and began to plan their work. A second workshop session on assessment was directed to members of the Criterion Three Committee, academic department chairs, and the Assessment Council. The liaison discussed the accreditation process with the Steering Committee over lunch, met with the General Education Taskforce, and reviewed the self-study plan with the coordinator.

◇ **Steering Committee meetings.** The Steering Committee initially met monthly but met more frequently as the self-study continued. Its most important task was to reach consensus on the institution's strengths and concerns and on recommendations for action. Steering Committee members read and commented on the drafts produced by each committee, shared information across committees, and attempted to prevent duplication of effort.

◇ **Collecting and assembling data.** Each committee was free to collect data as it saw fit. Much of what you need probably exists or is being collected for some other purpose. For example, our division of student affairs had already scheduled the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, and we were planning the ACT Alumni Outcomes Survey as part of overall institutional assessment. The results of these surveys were major sources for the self-study committees.

◇ **Encouraging discussion and feedback.** We circulated drafts produced by the individual committees to the Steering Committee; to members of the Administrative Advisory Council (the President, vice presidents, deans, executive directors, Student Government president, Academic Senate chair, and leaders of the employee unions); and to other individuals with an interest in a particular criterion. Although few people provided written comments, those who did were quite helpful. People who did not comment appreciated being informed. We had hoped to circulate a full draft for comment before completing the report but got behind schedule. Instead, a subcommittee of the Steering Committee developed a survey that we sent to all employees and Student Government representatives. The survey gave them an opportunity to agree or disagree with the Steering Committee's view of strengths, challenges, and recommendations. The survey indicated broad-based support of the self-study conclusions.

Facing Inevitable Challenges

◇ **Writing an evaluative self-study.** It is natural to want to portray one's institution positively. However, the purpose of the self-study is not only to demonstrate that the Criteria for Accreditation are met but also to identify strengths and weaknesses in order to improve the institution. Some committee members will be reluctant to bring problems to light; others will use the opportunity to advance personal complaints. Most will want to include too much descriptive information. But when is a concern a **concern?** Not every problem is significant enough to include. Our positive approach was to describe weaknesses honestly but also to develop plans for addressing the issues. We used the word "challenge" rather than "concern" to emphasize future action more than the current problem.

◇ **Differences of opinion.** It is unlikely that you will reach consensus on every issue. There are often both positive and negative consequences of a policy, differing interpretations of the facts, and varying perspectives on a problem. The study committees or Steering Committee, after examining an issue, may arrive at a conclusion but realize that a significant number of campus constituents disagree. When there was no clear consensus, we presented the descriptive information and both points of view. For example, our review of class sizes indicated relatively small class sizes and little change in recent years. Nevertheless, faculty in one particular college repeatedly expressed their dissatisfaction with increasing class size. We presented the statistical information as well as the faculty complaint.

◇ **But that's not what I wrote!** Our biggest error was believing that eight committee drafts could be edited into a readable, coherent document. We planned to have each committee submit a first draft, revise it after comments, and submit a second draft that we would edit and circulate for wide review and final revision. We actually rewrote much of what was submitted and drafted much of the document ourselves.

This was necessary for several reasons. Chapters tended to be repetitious since the same information could be used in relation to different criteria. Also, writing styles varied widely, and some committees addressed the criteria much more thoroughly than others did. Some authors revised in response to the comments they received, but others lost enthusiasm for the project and did not. We tried in the final report to convey the conclusions of the committees and the Steering Committee, but some individuals were probably offended that much of their original language was lost. We could have avoided this problem if we had referred to their material not as "chapters" but as "reports" from which the final document would be prepared. We did include the original material in the exhibit room.

◇ **Oops!** Build time into your schedule for the unexpected and uncontrollable, and enforce the deadlines you have established. The printer may make a mistake; the bindery may be behind schedule. We printed 300 Self-Study Report covers with an error in the title and had to reprint!

◇ **Capturing a moving object.** The institution does not stand still, waiting for the self-study committees to describe it. One of the difficulties of beginning the self-study so long before the visit is the ever-changing nature of a university. Material written in August may no longer be true in April. For most issues, this factor presents only a minor headache of verb-tense decisions. However, major changes over which you have no control may significantly affect the pattern of evidence.

Reform of general education was our moving target. The previous visiting team had identified the general education program as a concern, and no changes had been implemented since the visit. The Academic Senate was debating a new program model recommended by a task force. Would it be adopted, and how might it be amended? We waited as long as possible, described progress to date, included the recommended general education model in the appendix, and promised to provide more information at the time of the visit. By placing more detail in an appendix, which could be printed later than the main report, we were able to provide a more current version.

Professional Growth

Leading a successful accreditation process can be a very rewarding experience. You will have the satisfaction of making a vital contribution to your institution, and you will grow professionally. A university community that understands the institution's strengths and weaknesses can build a better future. Your enhanced knowledge, skills, and personal relationships will be an asset to your own professional future as well.

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Self-Study in the Midst of Turmoil, or Self-Directed Self-Study

David Sherlock
Janice Weir

Independence Community College's (ICC) long history was never more important than when the College began the evaluation process for the NCA self-study approximately two years prior to the March 1998 team visit. The following were critical issues before the institution during the self-study process:

- ○ Leadership transition
- ○ Political climate of institution

Leadership Transition

The institution experienced a transition in all areas of leadership and administration at the top level during the self-study process. The positions of President, Dean of Instructional Services, Dean of Institutional Services, and the Finance Officer were filled by new employees at sometime during the self-study process. An Interim President was hired and served a tenure of one year, which was followed by the hiring of the current President in October 1997, five short months prior to the team visit. The institution was in the midst of such transition that the coordinators were self-motivated and self-directed during the self-study process. (Self-Study for the North Central Association, March 1998)

Political Climate of Institution

The numerous changes in the leadership of the institution created an atmosphere of confusion and upheaval. There was a perception across the campus of a lack of communication, which was verified through the *Institutional Assessment Surveys*. Employees found themselves in an environment of turf battles and competition rather than working as a cohesive unit. Trust became a major factor in the daily working relationships among staff, faculty, and administration.

The positive side to the numerous changes in administrative personnel provided the employees complete ownership in the self-study process and the final document. The evaluation process of the institution served as a catalyst to bring all facets together working as a unit once again.

The political climate improved as the following were implemented by the coordinators: open Steering Committee meetings, open Criterion Committee meetings, regular reports to the Board of Trustees, campus-wide news releases, In-Service for employees, activities that involved entire campus; and an Interim President who was well known and respected by the faculty, staff, and administration.

Objectives of the Self-Study

The primary purpose of the self-study was to continue our accreditation by NCA. The secondary purpose and most important was to encourage institutional improvement. This dual purpose led to the following objectives, which were utilized to guide the self-study process:

- To determine that Independence Community College meets the Criteria for Accreditation and General Institutional Requirements of the North Central Association Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.
- To involve the entire college community in an internal and external examination and evaluation of the effectiveness of the college to fulfill the College's mission.
- To improve and enhance the College's educational effectiveness.
- To identify and enhance institutional strengths in order to maintain quality educational effectiveness.
- To identify and address institutional concerns in order to improve quality educational effectiveness.
- To provide data that will be useful in developing Independence Community College's continuous improvement plans.

(Guide to Institutional Self-Study, pg. 3; Self-Study for the North Central Association, March 1998, pg 8)

Action Plan for Self-Study

The Self-Study Coordinators, with approval of and support by the Steering Committee, established the following action plan to guide the self-study process:

- Established criterion committees and chairpersons
- Established a time-line and maintained flexibility
- Developed a plan entitled, *Guide to Institutional Self-Study*
- Established Citizens' Commission to study institution
- Developed and implemented an annual Institutional Assessment Survey
- Planned campus-wide in-service days and activities
- Maintained campus involvement in self-study process
- Prepared an *Executive Summary* of Self-Study Report
- Attended NCA Annual Meetings
- Provided NCA updates at monthly Board of Trustees meetings

The self-study was undertaken with the premise that everyone associated with the institution would be involved with the evaluation process: a total College effort would be needed to achieve the ultimate goal of reaccreditation.

Facilitating the Process

The campus-wide investigation of the institution is complete. There are numerous additional activities that require attention to detail in order that the document represent the picture the institution wishes to portray.

- Set guidelines for hardware and software usage
- Organize resources for team room
- Design mechanics of self-study
- Select printing vendor
- Allocate money in budget for self-study activities

The Self-Study Coordinators kept the process moving toward completion through daily meetings.

Final Preparations for Team Visit

The evaluation of the institution was critical in the formation of the self-study. However, the final preparations for the arrival of the team members and the time they are on campus are of equal importance. Attention to every detail is vital in making the team visit a success. The following items need careful planning and execution in order for the visit to go smoothly.

- Prepare campus facilities for team's arrival
- Prepare resource room on campus
- Arrange for snacks and meals on campus and hotel
- Make hotel arrangements for team
- Reserve team room at hotel
- Arrange to meet team at airport
- Provide vehicles for team during visit
- Communicate with team chair
- Schedule locations and times for various groups to meet with team members
- Be flexible and be prepared
- Relax and showcase your institution

Careful attention to the above will make whatever unexpected situations that may occur seem less stressful. Remain calm and demonstrate your pride in your institution, remember **"you will survive"!**

Celebrate!

ICC planned a campus-wide luncheon celebration the afternoon after the exit session. This luncheon was organized with the intent to celebrate the activity of self-evaluation and the completion of that process and the visit from the Team. The institution was anticipating a recommendation of continued accreditation with the next comprehensive evaluation in ten years; however, the celebration would occur no matter the outcome. The attendance at the event far surpassed any expectations. This celebration provided the campus community an opportunity to relax and unwind after three years of work.

In Retrospect

Independence Community College completed its self-study and hosted the five member team in March 1998. The institution was granted continued accreditation with the next comprehensive evaluation in ten years and two reports due on the progress of the assessment program. Among the evaluation team's findings was the following: "ICC has enjoyed a long history of continuous operation, community support and student academic success. ICC is a facilitator and change agent for its community. The institution continues to have a major impact on the quality of life and the educational development of its citizens and clearly supports lifelong learning for all its publics, customers and clientele." (Report of a Visit to Independence Community College, pg. 29)

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Countdown to the Team Visit: Self-Study Coordinator Survival Tools

Betty Battist
Sue Budjac

Writing the Self-Study Report

A well-written Self-Study Report is crucial to the successful outcome of the self-study process. It captures and reflects months of work of individuals who participated in self-study committees and provides a "snapshot" in time of the institution's strengths and challenges. As one visiting team member described it, "The report is the most important piece of information I receive about the institution prior to the visit. If the report gives a clear, concise description of the College, along with a frank analysis of its challenges, then I can approach the visit feeling positive about the institution and comfortable about the task ahead."

Based on this perspective, here are a few suggestions for writing the report in such a way that makes that all-important positive first impression:

- ◇ **Critical analysis vs descriptive information.** While it is important to describe your institution fully enough so that the team has a complete picture, don't forget to answer the "so what" questions. "Is your college where it should be in a particular area, or is it struggling?" "How do you compare with established NCA criteria?" "What plans have you put in place to improve the situation?"
- ◇ **Maintaining a positive tone.** Teams expect that you will "tell it like it is." The key is providing an open, honest analysis of a less-than positive situation, while at the same time describing how the college is committed to moving forward in this area. Teams expect that all institutions have areas of improvement; they also expect that the college has identified the areas of improvement and has plans in place to make necessary changes.
- ◇ **Avoid educational "jargon."** Write the report as if you were writing for a newspaper or magazine, rather than a Ph.D. thesis. While all team members have an educational background, they are most impressed by a report that is well-organized, concise, and free of excessive educational jargon. Although you may utilize more than one writer as you develop the report, appoint one person as the "editor" who has the responsibility to ensure consistency of style, etc. Call upon others, including faculty and support personnel, to assist in proofreading and grammar checks.
- ◇ **Layout of the report.** The basic rules of writing and layout apply in the Self-Study Report. Pay careful attention to the use of white space, headings, font, type size, etc. Review other Self-Study Reports and capture the best aspects for your own report.

Role of the Self-Study Coordinator

During the last few months, when the team visit is looming, your role as the Self-Study Coordinator goes through its final metamorphosis. The result is determined by the climate of the college and your stamina. The following describes what you might expect during the three-six months immediately preceding the team's arrival.

As the visit approaches the college atmosphere becomes highly charged, the pace quickens, stress builds, and at times, activities seem frantic. Stay organized, keep things in perspective, and maintain your sense of humor. The team will leave after only three days, but your peers will remain. Continue to work as a neutral party. This increases your ability to listen, understand, and communicate effectively. Acknowledge that you alone cannot fix it all, you cannot do it all, and, if you try, you will not survive it all.

Once the team members arrive on campus, *they* are in control of your evaluation for the next three days. Difficult as this may be for the Self-Study Coordinator, your role is to let go of the process and to help others work within the parameters laid out by the team. Remember, too, that you cannot anticipate everything. Unexpected requests will arise, schedules will change, and the expectations of team members and some college employees will differ.

Tips in Preparing for a Successful Visit

◇ **Board.** Work closely with your Board of Trustees in these last few months. During the three months prior to the visit the Self-Study Coordinator attended each Board meeting and involved Board members in role play scenarios. These scenarios were centered on NCA's Criteria and General Institutional Requirements and were designed to prepare the Board for its role during the visit.

◇ **College.** Keep everyone in the institution informed of the latest events. Team members' names, the agenda, and meeting invitation lists were e-mailed to all employees. Encourage employees to keep their electronic calendars up-to-date and to try to be on campus during the team's visit.

Work with your Buildings and Grounds Team to help "spruce" up the facilities before your "guests" arrive and attend to last minute touches. Northcentral Technical College's (NTC's) last minute touches included room setups, hanging a welcome banner, arranging for team transportation during the visit, and removing six inches of snow from our walkways.

Create a "share the wealth" atmosphere throughout the self-study process. At NTC, individuals and groups were credited with their accomplishments and recognized through the college's newsletter. We were out to catch people doing things right and then publicize it.

◇ **Team Chair.** You will also work with the team chair to communicate the team's agenda, finalize travel arrangements, ensure adequate lodging accommodations, establish an adequate resource room, and plan for special needs requests of team members.

◇ **Special interest groups.** Some campus groups may see the team's visit as a forum to promote their special interests. One of NTC's four unions planned to picket in front of the college during the team's visit but canceled just prior to the visit. Another union administered a survey to its bargaining members to express their issues just prior to the team's arrival and then notified the team of its existence during their first hour on campus. These activities came as a surprise to the Self-Study Coordinator, but they did not surprise the team. As the coordinator, you will not prevent these types of activities, you cannot control them, and you should not overestimate the impact that they will have on the outcome of your visit.

◇ **Team visit.** Identify individuals within the institution to serve as "point persons" in major areas of the institution. Administrative assistants who were located throughout the college were NTC's "point persons." They were extremely effective and had an uncanny ability to locate the people and information that the team needed.

◇ **Resource Room.** A centralized location that affords the team work and meeting space is essential for the team's resource room. Give special attention to the team's technology needs for computers, telephones, and fax machines, as well as human comfort needs, including comfortable chairs, good lighting, and refreshments.

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Question: What Worked Best?

Michael J. Reich

Background

The University of Wisconsin-River Falls is a member of the University of Wisconsin System. UW-River Falls is a comprehensive university that grants bachelor's and master's degrees in the colleges of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences; Arts and Sciences; Education and Graduate Studies; and the School of Business and Economics. Approximately forty academic majors are offered to a student body that is approaching an enrollment of 6000 students. The university operates on an annual budget of $55 million. In the spring of 1998, UW-River Falls completed a successful NCA comprehensive visit. UW-River Falls was granted continued accreditation with the next comprehensive evaluation in ten years. No follow-up visits or reports were recommended. This author served as a Self-Study Co-coordinator and also serves a NCA Consultant-Evaluator.

Purpose

Completing the comprehensive self-study is an enormous task that demands a concerted effort by individuals throughout the entire university. NCA provides numerous sources of information that clearly specify the self-study requirements. These include: The *Handbook of Accreditation*, the annual *Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement*, and workshops conducted in conjunction with the Annual Meeting. Each of these resources should be routinely accessed.

The purpose of this paper is quite limited. Having recently completed the comprehensive self-study process and having had time to reflect on the entire process, I have chosen to approach this paper as I might construct a final examination question. Readers may take several items of practical advice from the answer. Before posing and answering the question, I must acknowledge that all activities associated with the self-study are significant and worthy of comment. The contributions of all participants are important to the overall success of the process. There are numerous routine required tasks that will go unmentioned here. Other papers address these and other comprehensive issues.

Question: *Describe a major activity associated with the comprehensive self-study that was extremely beneficial in completing the process. Describe one specific activity that could be improved.*

◇ **Planning and writing the first draft of the self-study.** Two years prior to the scheduled visit, the Self Study Co-coordinators were appointed. These individuals assumed the responsibilities associated with the self-study as part of their regular responsibilities as the Associate Provost and the Director of Institutional Research, respectively. These positions were half-time administrative positions. Each Co-coordinator held a half-time faculty appointment as well. In addition, a steering committee representing all major university functional units was appointed. Among their many activities, steering committee members had the major responsibility for planning and developing the initial draft of the self-study. The Co-coordinators attended the NCA Annual Meeting and the Workshops for Self-Study Coordinators, and reviewed exemplary Self-Study Reports. Attendance at these meetings proved very instructive. First, the opportunity to discuss planning issues with those who had recently completed the process was informative. Second, the opportunity to obtain sample copies of Self-Study Reports gave us several concrete examples of different approaches to producing a self-study.

In addition to information obtained at the Annual Meeting, the university had relevant expertise in that one co-coordinator serves as an NCA Consultant-Evaluator. The experience of participating in campus visits and familiarity with visiting team activities and procedures was helpful. However, as with many issues, it is often appropriate to bring additional credibility to the process by seeking off-campus advice. We invited our NCA liaison to campus to attend a series of meetings with the academic leadership, faculty leaders, students, and the steering committee. The information provided by the liaison served to enhance the importance of the self-study; created a greater sense of urgency and involvement; raised awareness of the importance of assessment and evaluation in the self-study; and reinforced existing expectations.

The self-study was organized in the traditional fashion, which included an introduction, a response to the concerns of the previous visit, a chapter devoted to each of the Criteria for Accreditation, and a request for continued accreditation. The General Institutional Requirements and the Basic Institutional Data Forms were included among the appendices. Steering committee members were responsible for obtaining information and drafting the preliminary chapters. This activity resulted in a very lengthy, redundant, and incomplete document written in many separate voices. No tables or figures were included at this stage. However, it represented real progress and it was comforting to actually see a "hard copy" of the report. The report identified areas of strength and concern and allowed us to determine where additional work was needed.

At this early stage, before the editing process was begun, we identified an administrator on a UW campus who serves as an NCA Consultant-Evaluator and whose campus had recently successfully completed a comprehensive visit and requested a review of the "rough" self-study. Given the length of the report and its preliminary nature, this was a difficult and time consuming task for the reviewer. However, it paid great dividends for us. An outside voice was very welcome and carried significant weight at this point. It was pointed out repeatedly that our report was too long, too descriptive, and not evaluative to the degree required. Many of our evaluative statements lacked significant evidence to support them and in some cases were not clearly stated. Great insight was gained at this point, which allowed us to focus on the appropriate issues. Feedback received at this early stage was extremely valuable and was applied throughout the remainder of the drafting and editing process.

Following this first draft we established a specific format. While it is tempting to devote much time and creativity to the selection of the appropriate format, we found it practical simply to adopt the style successfully used by a similar university. As the writing process continued, missing information was collected and several drafts were produced. These were shared with various stakeholders for comment and edited, edited, edited. An attempt was made to remove all redundant, ambiguous, and unsupported statements. The final report was edited by a single writer to ensure a consistent voice.

In summary, it was helpful to obtain advice early in the process. It is useful to contact others who have recently completed the process to obtain feedback regarding planning and the first draft. It may be helpful to contact nearby colleges or other system institutions to obtain consultants.

◇ **Developing a timeline and schedule of activities.** The process of developing a timeline and schedule of activities was an important part of the process that could have been improved. Although the Self-Study Co-coordinators and the steering committee were able to develop a list of activities and completion deadlines, it was difficult to develop a sense of urgency and importance around these timelines. The Co-coordinators and all steering committee members had additional responsibilities that were unrelated to the self-study and as with many other academic issues committees, faculty and staff work at their desired pace. In the initial planning, we anticipated delays and tried to account for these. However, in spite of this we found it necessary to revise our timeline on several occasions. While meeting the final deadline for completion was never in doubt, the last few weeks were hectic and stressful as the final document neared completion. Strong academic leadership and the visits by the NCA liaison and the first draft reviewer provided the impetus to complete the required tasks in a timely manner.

Conclusion

Seek advice and feedback regarding planning and the first draft early in the process. The value of this early advice compounds as it permits effective editing, rewriting, and further planning. Strong leadership and perhaps close administrative monitoring may be necessary to ensure that established timelines are met.

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Early Planning and Writing Strategies

Betsy Griffin
J. Larry Martin

Introduction

The self-study process began at Missouri Southern State College with the appointment of two co-coordinators in March 1995 and culminated with the team visit in Spring 1998. The development of the *Self-Study Plan* linked the self-study process to the mission of the College. The Plan contained the specific tasks of the Steering Committee, the functions of the self-study committees, objectives of the study, and a projected outline of the final report. These early planning decisions would affect the structure of committees, their roles, data collection and analysis, and ultimately the resource room. Some of these effects were planned, some were unforeseen.

Timeline

One of the first steps toward creating a smooth self-study process is the development of a realistic timeline. To some degree the timeline requires a backwards development approach. The date of the visit sets the end of the timeline. The self-study materials need to be ready for mailing two months before the visit. The time required for printing and binding must be considered when targeting the date for finishing the final draft of the report. Several other considerations come into play in developing the rest of the timeline. One consideration is how much time will be necessary for the committees to gather and analyze data. This period may vary depending on how much of the necessary data is available from ongoing institutional research and how much will need to be gathered just for the self-study. In planning work periods for committees it is necessary to take into account the times that faculty committee members will be most available to work. We planned committee assignments for mid-semester periods with work deadlines before semester ends or breaks. As coordinators we planned tasks for ourselves during the summer and semester breaks when others were less available. During these times we read reports and edited drafts that could then be sent to committee members early in the next semester. Additional considerations include how many drafts of the document are desirable, how many people will be involved in different steps, and when having a technical writer available would be most helpful.

Committee Structure and Roles

Once the self-study plan was written, the Steering Committee established four major study committees structured around the five Criteria for Accreditation, one committee for each criterion except Criterion Four. In addition to their assigned criterion, committees were given responsibility for related aspects of Criterion Four. Each major committee was chaired by two members of the Steering Committee and was composed of subcommittees. Subcommittees addressed assigned topics within their specific criterion. Topics were developed by grouping related patterns of evidence so that every pattern of evidence was addressed by some committee. For example, topics and patterns of evidence for Criterion Two were:

○ Governance and administration	patterns of evidence A-D
○ Human resources	patterns of evidence E-G
○ Physical resources	patterns of evidence H-J
○ Financial resources	patterns of evidence K, L

Each major committee also attended to General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) and comments from the previous evaluation team related to its respective criterion. The *Handbook of Accreditation* contains a table suggesting the relationships between the Criteria and the GIRs. This structure ensured consideration of all patterns of evidence and GIRs.

The initial task of the subcommittees was to collect, analyze, and present in a narrative the evidence that supported how Missouri Southern State College met the criterion assigned to them. As they presented evidence, they were also to reference the sources used to obtain the evidence. Thus began a cycle of committee report, coordinator review, coordinator request for revision or more information, and committee response, which would repeat many times.

Although our expectation as coordinators of the self-study was that the chairpersons of the major committees would synthesize reports from their respective subcommittees into one narrative, hindsight indicates that expectation was not made clear or accepted. Consequently, synthesis became the task of the coordinators. Another revelation of hindsight pertains to the decision of parceling out Criterion Four. Criterion Four deals with the "institution's future viability and effectiveness" and its continuing ability to accomplish its purposes. It seemed appropriate to assign patterns of evidence for "continuing ability" to those committees addressing the related "present ability." For example, issues of continuing resources were assigned to the Criterion Two committee, which was already considering organization of resources. Criterion Four issues of long-range planning and decision-making were assigned to the Criterion One group, which was already dealing with planning and decision-making processes. However, the committees felt ill-prepared to comment on the future. Ultimately it fell to the coordinators to develop that part of the self-study dealing with Criterion Four.

Maintaining an Evaluative Focus

Critical to the success of a self-study is self-evaluation. The self-study must be more than a description of "what is." It must also measure "what is" against "what should be" or "what is desired." Initial guidelines to committees requested they include in their reports their assessment of strengths, challenges, and recommendations for improvement. This request was intended to encourage them to draw conclusions and seek resolutions. First reports generally did not attend to this appeal. During subsequent meetings with subcommittees individually and collectively, we reminded the committee members to keep asking "So what?" when presenting data. The committees were also reminded that all statements of strengths or challenges must be supported in the text. Some questions and thoughts to prompt evaluative reporting were:

- Do these data represent a situation that is good, bad, satisfactory, appropriate?
- What standard are we measuring against?
- Are there external standards that could be used? (Not all standards should be internal.)
- What could be done to improve the situation?

Succeeding reports became more evaluative. However, constant reminders to both the committees and to ourselves remained necessary. The listing of strengths and challenges at the end of the chapters encouraged a more evaluative narrative because the text had to support them. A recommendation accompanied each challenge in the list. This recommendation prompted the committee or the College to seek resolution. Many recommendations were followed by a status report indicating action taken toward resolution. The combination of challenge, recommendation, evaluation, and status served to channel the self-study toward self-evaluation. It also demonstrates to the evaluation team that the institution can and does address identified challenges. One such combination is shown below.

- **Challenge.** Counseling staff advises all undeclared majors. During the brief registration periods, students have to wait in line and sometimes advising decisions are rushed.
- **Recommendation.** Registration responsibilities for the undeclared student need to be shared by other offices.
- **Status.** Counseling is setting up computer stations where, during peak times, others can assist in enrolling undeclared majors. Currently, four extra stations are present. Also, the same advisors who are trained to work during summer freshman enrollment will assist in peak times throughout the year.

Writing Considerations

One concern to keep in mind if different people will write sections of the self-study is the compatibility of the software programs. One option is to request that all of the writers use the same software. This option cuts down on problems encountered when material is translated from one program to another. However, it imposes an additional burden on the writers who are not already using the specified software. Such a requirement could contribute to a decrease in cooperation and good will. We chose not to specify one software program. Most of the translation problems we encountered were minor, such as page formatting problems. However, we encountered some frustrating occurrences, such as unexplained duplicate paragraphs in the printing of text. Material presented in tables caused more difficulty than straight text. It would be helpful if writers were asked to keep tables simple and avoid using boxes in creating tables or setting off other material. If multiple programs are used, one must be prepared to deal with some glitches.

In working through drafts of the report we developed two features that were quite helpful. The first feature was the use of brackets to insert reminders or questions into the draft. The bracketed material gave us some assurance that we would not forget something we had thought of in our reading of the draft. They also prompted other readers on the committees to provide additional information. The following sentence and bracket is an example from the second draft of our self study. "Missouri Southern boasts a 94% retention rate from the fall to spring semester for students who have taken the orientation class. [vs. what for whose who have not? How many don't take it? Why?]" The second feature was the development of an index. We did not start the index until later drafts, but having had it would have been helpful while we worked on earlier drafts. With the organization of chapters based on the criteria and patterns of evidence, information relating to the same area of campus (e.g., student services or library) often appeared in more than one chapter. This index helped us to keep track of where we discussed a topic and allowed us to find related sections, helping eliminate redundant information and ensuring full coverage. Updating the index as new drafts were finalized provided an index to help the evaluation team follow an area. When we learned from a consultant evaluator that team member assignments were usually made according to areas, like student services, instead of by criteria the index seemed like an especially good idea. This tip on team member assignments also influenced our thinking when we started to organize materials for the team resource room.

Resource Room

At the beginning of the process it seems like a long time before a resource room for the team will be needed. However, the resources needed for data gathering and how we would get these materials for the resource room were on our minds from the start. Early in the process, before we gave the subcommittees their charges, we brainstormed a list of resources that would likely address the various patterns of evidence. We also had the steering committee suggest additional resources. In the initial request for information from the subcommittees we asked them to reference the resources for the information they provided in the reports. They were also asked to provide a separate list of all of the references they used for their section. Some committees sent the resource materials they had used along with their initial reports. As they provided resources, we catalogued them. During the final year we requested that the subcommittees provide the remaining resources they had referenced.

Conclusion

Looking back, some early decisions in the Missouri Southern self-study process were highly beneficial while others had more mixed effects. A highly beneficial decision was that of our administration to have co-coordinators head the self-study process. Having two people helped not only in the division of labor, but also allowed for a sharing of ideas and perspectives on the process. The early decisions we made in developing the timeline provided an effective schedule for the work. The flow of work went smoothly except for a couple of committees who missed deadlines. We followed the timeline fairly closely and comfortably felt we were accomplishing the job. An early decision that had a large but mixed impact on the self-study was the decision to take a criterion-based orientation to the chapters. This decision influenced our committee structure and the structure of the self-study report. The Steering Committee highly favored the criterion-based organization because it made it easy to see that the patterns of evidence for each criterion were being addressed. However, this approach created some overlaps in committee work and reports submitted for different criteria. It also meant that getting the complete picture for a campus unit required reading more than one part of the self-study report. Careful consideration should be given to the early decisions, because they govern the process and potential success of the self-study for its two to three year duration.

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Chapter 12

Self-Study and Evaluation: Practical Advice

THE CONNECTING DISCONNECTS

104th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
April 10-13, 1999 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

The Self-Study Plan: A Tool for Connecting the Disconnects

Burton O. Witthuhn

When was your organization last put to the test of an accreditation visit? Was it ten years ago—currently the maximum time permitted between accreditation and subsequent reaffirmation—or a lesser time period? After your last reaffirmation of accreditation did your organization breathe a collective sigh of relief and then leave the annual updates to a select few? Or, is your self-analysis a dynamic, viable, and ongoing process of organizational review and improvement? Unfortunately, too often the evidence points to organizational re-engagements with accreditation than it does to continuous accreditation involvement.

Several forces external to the accreditation process are pressuring colleges and universities to rethink the timeliness of their accreditation responsibilities. Foremost in this thinking is the desire by higher education institutions to keep their evaluations of quality assurance and program improvement voluntary. The Federal Compliance Program as authorized by the 1992 Amendments to the Higher Education Reauthorization Act, and the 1996 NCA Commission amendments to policy and procedure requirements (Chapter 14, NCA *Handbook of Accreditation*, Second Edition, pp. 181-187) makes clear a necessity for institutions not becoming disconnected from regular accreditation involvement if they do not wish to lose the voluntary aspect of accreditation.

A second force is focusing attention on quality improvement. This force is, in part, coming from within higher education. There is an increasing momentum to apply the philosophical concepts of Total Quality Management (TQM) and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) to the agenda of organizational effectiveness. The Malcolm Baldrige Award as it has been transformed into state level processes also has brought pressure on higher education to connect the disconnects of its institutional structures.

Whether your organization is one restarting an accreditation review or one that is in a mode of continuous improvement, it is the purpose of this presentation to demonstrate how a complex organization can be described, analyzed, and evaluated as a connected whole using as a template for achieving this end a *Self-Study Plan*. Indeed, the Self-Study Plan provides a tool for connecting the disparate parts of a school organization into a single, unified, focused, coherent whole. In so doing, the Self-Study Plan is the enabler of the self-study activity. It is not a table of contents orchestrated out of a finished Self-Study Report but rather a device for achieving the goals of self-study analysis.

The Second Edition of the *Handbook of Accreditation* addresses the Self-Study Plan on pages 69, 72, and 73. It is appropriate to quote directly what is reported:

> *A beneficial self-study process must serve both internal and external purposes. Foresight and thoughtful structuring of the self-study process, as documented in a Self-Study Plan, enable institutions to gain maximum benefits from the time and energy expended.*
>
> *The steps the Steering Committee should take to develop this Self-Study Plan, which is sometimes called the "prospective" or "design," are relatively straightforward:*
>
> - *Establish a self-study calendar and timetable that takes into account the conduct as well as the purpose of the self-study process…*
> - *Identify institutional goals for the self-study process…*
> - *Determine how the General Institutional Requirements (GIR) and Criteria for Accreditation will be addressed in the self-study process and report…*
> - *Identify how the institution will report and respond to concerns expressed by previous NCA teams…*
> - *Include a preliminary outline of the Self-Study Report…*

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One additional piece of guidance is provided in the accreditation guidelines: the Self- Study Plan should be submitted to the Commission no later than 21 months before the evaluation visit.

Clearly, the Self-Study Plan is not a one- or two-meeting agenda of preparation. Nor should the plan be a one person creation. An action agenda for developing a plan should consider the following steps:

1. The Chief Executive Officer needs to appoint the Chair of the Steering Committee, if not a continuing responsibility, at least 36 months in advance of the NCA visit.
2. Membership of the Steering Committee needs to be activated as soon as feasible after the appointment of the Steering Committee Chair.
3. The Steering Committee should establish the institutional goals for the process and obtain the concurrence of institutional constituencies including the Board of Trustees.
4. The concerns and advice for improvement as articulated by the evaluators or internal participants from the last accreditation should be identified. There is some merit in going back to earlier evaluation reports to develop a Steering Committee sensitivity to campus issue resolution measures and the institution's commitment to achievement.
5. Each concern or recommendation for improvement needs to be assigned to a responsible party for the preparation of an action response. This information should be provided to subcommittees as they undertake the evaluation of GIRs and the five Criteria for Accreditation to ensure connection to past efforts.
6. Having articulated the goals for the self-study process and the concerns of past reports, the Steering Committee should now be ready to structure subcommittees to address the interconnectiveness of the institution and to appoint these committees.
7. A proposed timeline for carrying out the component parts of a self-evaluation is a logical next step. Interestingly, it is not unusual for a Steering Committee to discover that even with diligent effort a year may pass between the initiation and completion of a Self-Study Plan.
8. The final step in creating the Self-Study Plan is for the Steering Committee to develop a topical outline for the proposed self-study.

Having completed the eight steps outlined above, a school should then be prepared to know what its institutional priorities are. A school also should be sensitive to past perceptions of concern and weaknesses that needed to be overcome. The Steering Committee should be thoroughly familiar with the 24 General Institutional Requirements and the five Criteria and how these several components for accreditation review interrelate to define the interconnectiveness of an institutional reality. Committee members from units too often isolated from one another hopefully will have developed by the time the Self-Study Plan is completed a sense of institutional comradeship necessary to undergird whole-institution values of quality and performance strength. Finally, with a timeline and self-study outline in place the preparation of the self-study should be an easily achievable institutional goal.

Preparing for a self-study can be a formidable task if put off to the last minute. A well-conceived Self-Study Plan can make this complex undertaking into a seemingly routine activity. The benefit of helping an institution see how it is interconnected is of itself of sufficient value for an organization to engage in this important step.

Finally, as Walter Elliott once commented, "Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after another." (See January 1, *Pocket Pal 1999*). Quality education, too, is not one activity, it is many activities all connected and occurring one activity after another in interconnected relationships.

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Get the Ball Rolling!

Sue Kater
Peter Zawicki

GateWay Community College, in planning for the self-study, elected to ask every full-time employee to participate on a self-study committee. The self-study process officially began with an exciting kick-off event at an All Employee meeting. This paper briefly describes GateWay's self-study planning process and the kick-off event.

Background

GateWay Community College is an urban community college located in Phoenix, Arizona, and is one of the ten colleges that collectively make up the Maricopa Community College District. The Maricopa Community Colleges are the largest single provider of higher education in Arizona. During the 1997-98 academic year, GateWay had an unduplicated headcount of approximately 15,000 students. Curricular programs are varied, but the emphasis of GateWay's students has historically been on vocational and technical programs. The majority of students–more than 90%–attend part-time, and close to 30% fall into the 26-35 year old age bracket.

The Self-Study Process

GateWay is scheduled for a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation in February 2000. The self-study planning officially began in the spring semester, 1997, with the appointment of the self-study tri-chairs and formulation of the Self-Study Steering Committee. Tri-chairs were selected to bridge involvement from the last self-study and ensure involvement from administration and faculty.

The NCA Steering Committee selection followed the expected pattern of involving faculty, administration, staff, local board members, students, and other constituents. The challenge was in keeping the committee to a size that would be inclusive yet productive. The Steering Committee, early on in the self-study planning process, looked for ways to involve the entire campus in the self-study project. The most obvious way to maximize involvement was to put all employees on one of the self-study "teams." The Steering Committee felt that "team" sounded more upbeat than "committee." Since the primary goal of the self-study is to critically examine the institution for improvement, the Steering Committee felt comfortable directly involving the entire campus community. All full-time employees–faculty, administration, crafts, maintenance and operations, and the President–participate on a self-study team.

The committee wanted to provide communication avenues for the information that came forth through the process, involving individuals in the loop whether they chose high levels of participation or not. GateWay has more than 170 full-time employees, of which approximately 60 are full-time faculty. By placing every employee on a team, individuals would be able to decide for themselves how much they could and would participate, but everyone would have equal access to the information.

Two years before the self-study was to be completed, letters were sent to all full-time employees updating them on the self-study plan, and inviting them to participate on one of the self-study teams. Descriptions of the teams and responsibilities were included in the letter; and those who responded were assigned to the team of their choice. Those who did not respond or indicated no preference were randomly assigned to teams. The only team that was not randomly built was the team that would write to Criterion Three, *educational and other purposes*. We wanted that team to be heavily weighted with faculty.

Another intended goal of this process of involving everyone was to encourage those individuals who were not normally called upon to lead groups or were reluctant to participate to come forward–which many have–and help us get away from asking those "usual" leaders to take more on. We were hoping for surprises from untapped sources, which we received. Organizational and writing skills of individuals emerged, communication and leadership skills in others came forth, and we all began to learn more about each others' interests and abilities, in ways that would not be evident in the day-to-day operations of our job responsibilities. Faculty and staff came together with the common goal of improving the institution. The process of involving everyone resulted in extensive cross-collaboration among employee groups, programs, and departments.

Each team was assigned to write a chapter of the self-study, with the exception of two teams that had other responsibilities. The plan called for one chapter for each of the criteria, with additional teams responsible for communications, alumni and community surveys, and one team for each of our ancillary programs, the charter high school and the Skill Center. In addition, one team was responsible for writing the introductory chapter.

The members of the Steering Committee also participated on teams. They were instructed to participate in minimalist roles, providing a communication link between the Steering Committee and the teams, and acting as resources for operational questions. This proved to be effective in keeping the bigger picture communicated to the teams. Each team also had co-chairs. We asked for volunteers, looking for one faculty member and one non-faculty member to chair each team. The faculty co-chairs of each of the teams would come together near the end of the process and write the overall summary chapter. The co-chairs' responsibilities included calling team meetings, writing timelines, and making sure that their teams stayed on task.

Self-Study Kick-Off Event

Throughout the construction of the teams, we maintained some air of mystery to help build interest. Once the teams were finalized by the Steering Committee and co-chairs were selected, we asked the chairs to keep their teams secret until the kick-off event. The fall All Employee meeting was to be the announcement date of the teams. We had rubber balls of different colors for each team with the GateWay logo, "NCA-Kickoff," and the date printed on them to distribute at the meeting.

The morning of the meeting we darkened the room to create some excitement, put on some spirited sports music, and called all the co-chairs to the front of the room. The co-chairs announced what had been the "secret" members of their teams, and each team member came to the front of the room to receive his/her NCA ball. Everyone had fun and got into the spirit of the event. It proved to be a good way to get the momentum going and gave us a theme for the remainder of the year.

As we have progressed in the self-study process, the decision to involve everyone on teams has delivered what the Steering Committee expected. We have selected a self-study editor as a result of the work one member did on a team, an individual who might not have been called on or who might not have volunteered otherwise, but who will do an excellent job. The self-study will have a broad focus, a result of the combined views of all GateWay's employees, not one or two individuals. Everyone on campus feels involved, some happily and others reluctantly, but we all are in it together. The Steering Committee feels that we have been successful in keeping everyone in the loop. We will continue to "Keep the Ball Rolling!" throughout the self-study process.

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Asking the Right Questions: Integrity by Design

Jonathan A. Glenn
Samual P. Buchanan

Fostering integrity–in the self-study process, in the university as a complex organization of processes–depends first and most importantly upon design. At the University of Central Arkansas (UCA), this design involves (1) a set of key questions–the common feature in all parts of our self-study; (2) our organization of people and processes to explore those questions; and (3) our expectation that a practical planning document will emerge from our work.

The Mindset

> *"To keep up, you need the right answers; to get ahead, you need the right questions."*

This aphorism from *Wired* magazine's *Encyclopedia of the New Economy* (April 1998: 97) may have an edge to it that makes academics uncomfortable, but its wisdom has helped inform what has been thus far for UCA a remarkable journey in self-discovery through self-study. Answers are too often automatic. Our answers divide us. Answers are an end. But we needed a beginning, however uncomfortable beginnings may be.

Of course we wanted *information* (answers), but more importantly we sought informed judgments and ambitious plans. Of course we wanted *confidence*, but more importantly we sought concerned engagement and real follow-through. And the documents resulting from our self-study, though important, were less vital than the processes that produced them: the documents existed for the sake of the process, not the process for the documents. This mindset had real consequences: instead of asking, in the first place, for information (for the answers), we involved every unit in questioning–a process of exploration aimed at thoughtful and comprehensive evaluation.

What did we need? We needed:

- to reflect on UCA, not NCA;
- to engage in the real work of the university, not in mere hoop-jumping exercises;
- to concern ourselves with *self-study*, not self-*justification;*
- to produce plans for use–real, concerted action–not merely *useful* plans; and (both last and least)
- to satisfy the needs of accreditation.

Meeting these needs, we believed, depended on sound principle and sound design. The most important *principle* in UCA's 1998-2000 self-study is the conviction that the departments, units, and processes of the university–where the work of the university is most fundamentally carried on–should not only be the primary source of information for the self-study, but should also be the first source of analysis and evaluation, identifying their own most significant strengths and concerns and making initial recommendations for action. Thus the university's self-study begins with departmental-unit-process self-studies that inform each more general stage of evaluation.

Our self-study *design* seeks to revivify connections among the key elements in an organization:

- its purposes,
- its commitment to quality,
- its historical self-understanding and its vision for its future, and
- its attention to where it fits into the complex web of university and community.

What is perhaps unusual about the design of our process is its insistence that these key elements and their connections are reduplicated in every part, even the seemingly smallest parts, of the university. To facilitate exploration of these elements, we devised a set of Key Questions for a Self-Study, presented in the next section.

Key Questions for a Self-Study

The areas outlined below identify the critical dimensions of a self-study—a review intent on excellence. The areas are keyed to the Criteria for Accreditation published by NCA in its *Handbook of Accreditation*, but they are not identical to those criteria. The questions listed in each area are suggestions, ways to approach the concerns addressed in each area, and applicable—with appropriate adjustments—to the university as a whole *and* to the units within it.

◇ **Area 1: Purposes, processes, resources** (Criteria One and Two)

This area addresses an organization's purposes and the ways in which the organization accomplishes those purposes.

- What are our purposes? Why do we exist? What do we do? How do our purposes support the university's mission?
- How do we accomplish our purposes? What processes, functions, tasks do we use?
- What resources (human, financial, physical) are available to allow us to accomplish our purposes? How are these resources organized (organizational structure and leadership, budgeting, use of space and equipment)?

◇ **Area 2: Self-assessment and improvement** (Criteria Three and Four)

This area addresses an organization's effectiveness, its ways of monitoring effectiveness, and its responsiveness to the conclusions drawn from its self-assessments.

- Are we accomplishing our purposes? How effectively are we accomplishing our purposes? What do we do well? What do we not do so well?
- How do we demonstrate our effectiveness? Do we have an ongoing self-assessment plan to monitor our effectiveness? How well do our self-assessment processes work?
- What is our response to the results of our self-assessments? How can we accomplish our purposes more effectively?

◇ **Area 3: Perspectives and planning** (Criterion Four)

This area addresses the historical perspective/development of the organization and asks about mid- and long-range (strategic) planning. Its questions about stability and planning for change are a balance to the questions about responsiveness asked in area two.

- How has our organization evolved over the past ten years? Have our purposes changed? Have the ways in which we accomplish our purposes changed?
- How stable/sustainable is our organization?
- Where would we like to be ten years from now? What changes need to take place? What planning processes are in place (or proposed) to enable us to get where we want to be or to make the desired changes?

☐ **Area 4: Practices and relationships** (Criterion Five)

This area addresses all organizational practices and relationships and their integrity. We can identify key relationships by asking, "Whom do we serve?" "Who depends on us?" "On whom do we depend?" This area also concerns itself with the quality of faculty/staff/workplace climate and with service orientation.

- ○ In general: What are our key relationships? How responsive are we to the interests and concerns of our constituents? How well are our purposes understood inside and outside the organization? What are our policies? Are they accessible (published, disseminated appropriately)? Are they being followed?
- ○ Internal relationships: What are our key relationships within the university? How are they monitored? What policies govern them? Are these policies understood and followed?
- ○ External relationships: What are our key relationships with entities outside the university? How are they monitored? What policies govern them? Are these policies understood and followed?

Why Basic Questions Are So Important

Our conviction about the importance of the questions asked may be explained by a brief contrast between the self-study process of 1988–1990 and the current enterprise.

The approach used by the steering committee in 1990 included an extensive and detailed list of questions used by the various task forces to pull together information regarding components of the university. These questions included asking units to describe their strengths and weaknesses. The task forces administered no evaluation of the units, nor did they ask for any plan for improvement. Reports were compiled at the task force level rather than originating at the unit level. This kind of questioning had negative consequences: faculty and staff felt little ownership in the self-study process and were, as a consequence, reluctant to involve themselves in it; the Steering Committee and task forces had difficulty getting submissions on time; and, in the end, the institutional report was largely a descriptive study of the university.

By contrast, in our current self-study, the key questions *originate* with the Steering Committee, but they *belong* to the task forces and, especially, the units/departments, a fact particularly evident in the remarkably different interpretations of the key questions by different task forces and different units. That is to say, the questions have guided units in their self-studies—have, like NCA's five criteria, marked out areas of universal applicability and importance—but they have at the same time lent themselves to a variety of situations and organizations, not by reduction but by accommodation. Submission rates have been high (and remarkably close to on-time!), and in a large number of the Self-Study Reports thoughtful and comprehensive evaluation—informed judgments and ambitious plans, concerned engagement and the promise of real follow-through—are hearteningly evident.

Results So Far

A team of NCA Consultant-Evaluators will be visiting the UCA campus early in the year 2000 (our Y2K Problem?). In the meantime, asking the right questions has already made a difference to UCA.

In particular, various units and departments across the campus are writing new grants (and getting them funded), effecting significant organizational change, improving processes. For example, work on the self-study for the Office of the Provost has led to a reorganization of reporting lines that allows more effective communication and leadership within the largest and most complex division of the university. Again, the Dean of Students reports that self-studies in student services have revealed policy and budget needs that have been or are being addressed. The UCA Police Department reports that the self-study process "enabled us to identify a strategic plan and infrastructure and management changes needed to implement a department-wide approach to community-oriented policing.... As a result of our self-study we have implemented organizational changes to provide improved supervision and leadership over the four different divisions of our department." Data developed in the self-study have led to a successful federal grant application for the UCAPD, and the department reports that the self-study process itself has generated some interest beyond the campus in Arkansas law enforcement circles. Further, some academic departments, while generally not reporting immediate dramatic changes, have used the self-study as an occasion to address long-standing political issues and to propose fundamental curricular review.

More generally, the self-study process has heightened awareness of the diversity of our campus and of the people and processes that make the university work. Our 130 self-studies have emphatically demonstrated what few of us have recognized effectively before: that we live and work in a web of relationships, a complex of connections and intersections we are only beginning to understand. If that demonstration results in more creative alliances, in increasingly effective communication, in collaborations both large and small, our self-study process will have found what it sought–the next set of questions?–integrity by design.

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Caveat Emptor– Campus Buy-In

Barbara Bauernfeind
Ro Hoar

What would a small community college have in common with a large university? Well, probably lots of things! However, the most common denominator is good ol' complacency almost to the point of apathy among its constituents. After all, if it (meaning anything) doesn't directly involve "me," why bother?

This attitude is what we (the co-coordinators of the self-study) felt was important to overcome in the process of evaluation of our campus. Ten years ago when our last team visit occurred, we didn't even know when the visit was to take place let alone what it involved. Therefore, we decided this couldn't or shouldn't happen again. If we were unaware, how many others suffered the same ignorance? What could we do to involve everyone: students, maintenance staff, office support staff, faculty and support staff, middle management, and administrators? How could we foster enthusiasm?

Well, we put our heads together with some of our committee and came up with two plans. The first involved our taking charge of the fall 1997 in-service day, and the second involved our getting a good publicity committee with lots of energy and creativity. These two activities worked for our campus. What works for other campuses needs exploration.

First of all, brainstorming with the Steering Committee took place. The adage about "two heads..." is not really ridiculous at all. The more people involved, the more ideas are generated. When we met with our steering committee regarding our in-service day, we had a lively session resulting in some great ideas. We decided on a brief film as an attention-getter. We also decided the day would go better if we moved the in-service off campus to a nearby resort center. Next, we chose a well-respected member of the committee to act as emcee, along with other committee members to give overall views of their respective criteria.

The first challenge came with designing a program that would inform and motivate the skeptical faculty and staff of Rend Lake College. Besides wining and dining the group, we had to create an informative, yet lively format to keep everyone's interest.

A video depicting "The Good Rend Lake College" and "The Bad Rend Lake College," which was approximately ten minutes in length, set the tone for an informal and light-hearted approach to a "not-so-interesting" subject. Next came the presentations by the moderator and the representatives of each criterion. Some chose an explanation of the criterion, some chose a skit to convey criterion information, and others used power-point slide presentations to illustrate key points of the criterion.

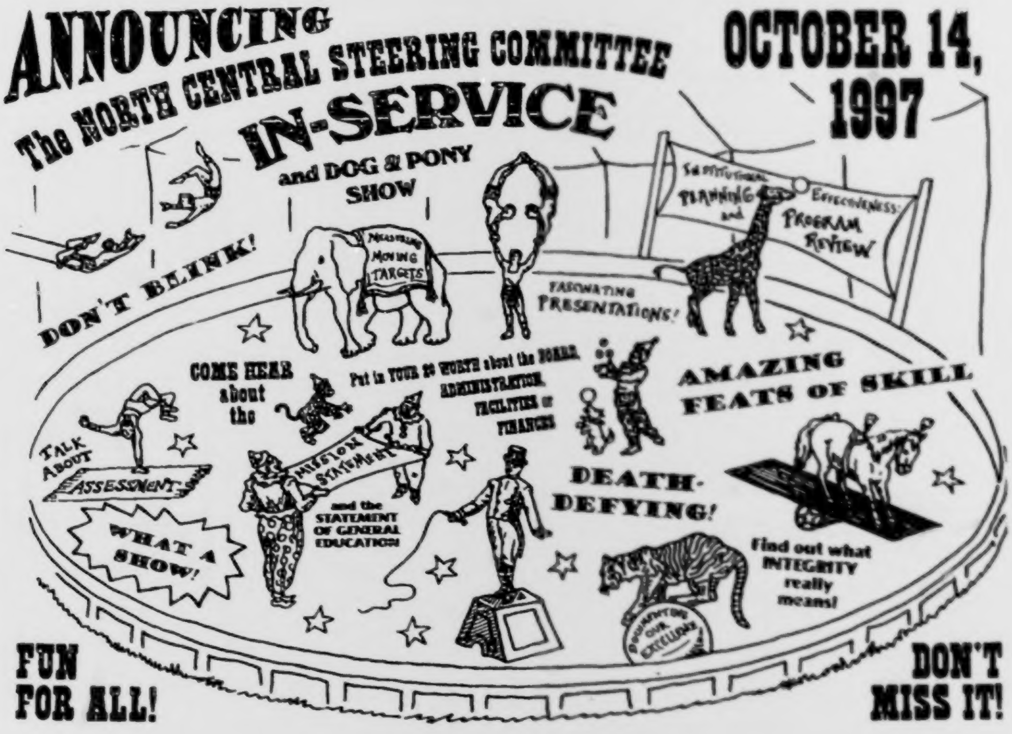
The pace of the in-service picked up momentum with an auction. Several nice items, such as prints donated by the Art Department, a membership to the Aquatic Center, house-cleaning service for a day, two fiber-glass dog houses constructed by the Industrial Technology Department, and many other attractive items were all donated by staff and faculty. Bids for items were not in dollars, but in minutes. All minutes bid to purchase a specific item had to be used as time donated to the self-study process in preparation for the evaluation visit. Twenty-six items were auctioned raising a total of 84,175 minutes (approximately 1,400 hours) put in escrow. As the Steering Committee needed special tasks completed, e.g., totaling survey data, campus publicity, etc., they would call upon "bidders" and withdraw minutes from the escrow account.

Next, approximately one hour was set aside where all who were in attendance filled out a survey pertaining to each criterion. Refreshments were served during this time. The committee felt if such a lengthy survey were sent to the home of each faculty and staff member, the return rate would be much smaller. Employees were guaranteed the anonymity of their responses. As surveys were turned in, each person's name was put into a drawing for three prizes. The winners received (in order) 25 dollars, 50 dollars, and a grand prize of dinner and an overnight stay for two at the resort where the in-service was conducted.

A carnival-like atmosphere (including helium-filled balloons) was used for the break-out sessions where each criterion solicited input and provided information about each specific area of the self-study. For example, a shooting-gallery style booth called "Shooting at Moving Targets" was employed by Criterion Four to illustrate how they would investigate meeting institutional needs. Criterion Five, which investigated institutional integrity, conducted a quick-paced question and answer contest with candy being thrown to the correct respondent. Current forms of student assessment strategies were listed on wall charts by the members of Criterion Three along with a draft of the General Education Statement on display asking for comments. Criterion One conducted a round-table discussion regarding the Mission Statement. Participants looked at the current Mission Statement and determined whether or not it accurately stated the philosophy and function of the College. This format was the beginning gathering public input regarding the revision of the Mission Statement. Another round table discussion was conducted by Criterion Two, which discussed Administration, the Board, Finances, and Facilities. The bulk of their discussion centered on the proposed Child Development Center.

Finally, a buffet lunch was served and door prizes were awarded. The in-service spanned five hours. Faculty and staff comments, both written and verbal, indicated a very favorable response. Some of the comments included the following:

> *...it is nice to know that so many RLC staff members care enough about the College and its future success...*
>
> *Although I was not one of the successful bidders in the auction, I would like to donate my time for any activities...*
>
> *...first time I stayed awake for an in-service after working maintenance all night...*
>
> *...this was the best in-service I've ever been to.*
>
> *...administration needs to take some lessons from you guys since they have to put on the next in-service...*


ANNOUNCING
The NORTH CENTRAL STEERING COMMITTEE
IN-SERVICE
and DOG & PONY SHOW
OCTOBER 14, 1997
DON'T BLINK!
Measuring MOVING TARGETS
FASCINATING PRESENTATIONS!
Institutional PLANNING and Effectiveness: PROGRAM REVIEW
COME HEAR about the
Put in YOUR 2¢ WORTH about the BOARD, ADMINISTRATION, FACILITIES or FINANCES
AMAZING FEATS OF SKILL
TALK ABOUT ASSESSMENT
MISSION STATEMENT
and the STATEMENT OF GENERAL EDUCATION
DEATH-DEFYING!
WHAT A SHOW!
Find out what INTEGRITY really means!
DOCUMENTING OUR EXCELLENCE
FUN FOR ALL!
DON'T MISS IT!

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The second phase of spreading the word to the campus involved the Campus-wide Publicity Initiative. A publicity committee was formed from four individuals who "bid" time for auction items plus two students from the Student Senate. They started their big campaign to promote campus awareness of the North Central accreditation process in the fall of 1998. Several activities were implemented.

At the Fun Fest (a student/faculty/staff afternoon of play), a flyer was distributed to all students at the food table informing them of the following:

- March 1999 visit
- They may be interviewed
- RLC must meet the five criteria
- Accreditation is important to their future

On October 13, 1998, at the annual fall in-service, the publicity committee asked the faculty and staff for their help in promoting the NCA visit. A timeline and what was expected of them was identified.

During the first week of the spring semester, the President of RLC distributed a letter promoting the NCA. It identified the importance of the accreditation process as well as the possibility that students may be approached by an NCA team member asking questions about the College. The letter was distributed in classes and was followed by a facilitated discussion.

Also, during the first week of spring semester, an informational campaign started with the publication of a question in the campus *FYI* (faculty and staff newspaper), staff e-mail, *Rend Lake Times* (the journalism class newspaper), student bulletin boards, and on the campus sidewalks. The questions pertained to important information students, faculty, and staff should know regarding the NCA visit. Students dropped their responses in a box in the Student Center, and faculty and staff contacted the chair of publicity by voice or e-mail with their responses. At the end of the week, all correctly answered questions went into a drawing for various prizes. As March approached, a popcorn machine was placed at the student drop-off site. All participants received a free bag of popcorn.

Next, on February 8 and 9 there was an informational lunch for students. Between 11:00 A.M. and 1:00 P.M. the cafeteria provided a free lunch to students. Plates and napkins had basic NCA information printed on them, and tables were decorated with traffic cones topped with the NCA flyer.

Finally, on March 15 a radio show broadcast the *Road to Accreditation* live from Rend Lake College. The NCA publicity committee interviewed students and staff about NCA issues. WRLC spoke directly to the people, and prizes were given to those who answered correctly.

This was a "hard-sell" to a tough audience. Even though these tactics did not reach everyone with the same positive motivation, most of the campus constituents were informed and reasonably enthusiastic about the process—at least this time everyone was aware of the date and purpose of the NCA visit.

Acknowledgments

Participants in the fall 1997 in-service included the Co-Coordinators of the Self-Study and the Criterion writers/investigators of the Steering Committee as follows: Barbara Bauernfeind, Ro Hoar, Rob Little, Chris Nielsen, Barbara Davenport, Debbie Benns, Chris Kuberski, Sue Tomlin, Kevin Weston, Don Lynch, Sue Trammell, Rick Marlow, Bob Ross, and Doug Carlson. Cathy Cross and Beth Mitchell, administrative assistants, were the carnival clowns.

The Publicity Committee consisted of Jana Groh, Chair, Joan Long, Jeannie Mitchell, and Paula Myers (support staff members) and Greg Hollman and Bryce James (Student Senate members).

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The Accreditation Process: Connecting Potential Disconnects on Campus

Rose C. McCallin

Establishing and maintaining regular communication links with institutional constituencies are necessary components of an effective self-study process. The following paper describes how one institution implemented a campus-wide *Information Campaign* to (1) inform its internal constituency about its self-study process, (2) encourage their participation throughout the process, and (3) teach them about requirements of affiliation with the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The terms *internal constituency* and *staff*, used interchangeably throughout this paper, include the institution's faculty, administrators, and support personnel.

Background

The College for Financial Planning, Inc., is a private, recently for-profit educational institution that offers a Master of Science degree program in financial planning to learners at a distance. In September 1998, the College for Financial Planning, Inc., underwent a comprehensive evaluation visit to reaffirm its accreditation status initially granted in November 1994. The Evaluation Team also conducted an onsite review of the College's request for Commission approval of a change in its legal status and ownership. The Apollo Group, Inc., a for-profit, publicly traded corporation, whose stock currently is listed on the NASDAQ stock exchange, acquired the educational programs and operations of the formerly nonprofit College for Financial Planning, Inc. in September 1997. Thus, the onsite visit in September 1998 encompassed two significant evaluation processes by the evaluation team as required for the Commission to consider the continued affiliation of the College for Financial Planning, Inc.

The scope of the combined comprehensive and institutional change visit in September 1998 mandated a self-study process that effectively encouraged staff participation and promoted open lines of communication. In its 26 years of existence, the College experienced relatively little organizational change under the same administration that spanned almost two decades. Thus, the sale alone introduced a number of changes internally as the institution converted its operations over to the Apollo Group, Inc., systems. As well, efforts to redesign and enhance students' instructional experiences through increased guidance and intellectual interaction among faculty, students, and educational materials commenced almost immediately after the sale.

During this time of considerable change, it was recognized that an increased likelihood existed for potential "disconnects" in communication among the internal constituency, including that involving the institution's self-study evaluation process. Therefore, the College for Financial Planning, Inc., organized and implemented an *Information Campaign* to communicate and elicit information throughout the self-study while aiming to minimize potential "disconnects" among its internal constituency.

Communicating Internally: The *Information Campaign*

The institution's *Information Campaign* consisted of the following three components:

- Sharing the College's recently-developed *Strategic Plan*—including the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified through the planning process—and encouraging staff input and comments

- Holding open forums that included presentations by either the President or the Self-Study Coordinator to discuss the (1) relationship of the *Strategic Plan* to the General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) and the five Criteria for Accreditation (Criteria) and (2) progress of the institution's self-evaluation process including what the College was doing well, where it needed to improve, and what it was doing to be better

- Issuing a weekly, two-page newsletter entitled NCA *Talking Points* throughout a six-week period immediately preceding the combined evaluation visit; the NCA *Talking Points* publications were intended to provide staff with a fun, user-friendly communication piece that covered everything from who the Commission is, to what institutional accreditation does and does not mean, to the roles played by the Self-Study Report, to the *Guidelines for Distance Education,* to the GIRs and the Criteria, to introducing the members of the Evaluation Team

Implementing the *Information Campaign*

The three components of the College for Financial Planning, Inc., *Information Campaign* were phased-in throughout the self-study process. The goals of this approach were to build an understanding of the self-study process among staff and through open communication, promote participation and ownership.

☐ Phase One: Sharing the Strategic Plan

The College's *Strategic Plan*—developed by the institution's management team in the six months immediately following the change-of-ownership—was distributed to all staff with a letter from the President asking for staff input. The major components of the *Strategic Plan* each fulfilled specific futuristic as well as information functions as follows:

- Description of the strategic planning process
- Communication of a comprehensive vision statement
- Affirmation of the College's mission as an institution of higher education
- Identification of five broad objectives aimed to fulfill the institution's mission and bring its vision into focus
- Presentation of the goals and sub-goals thought to underlie each objective
- Discussion of six *Keys to Our Success*—the criteria upon which all goal and sub-goal activities are measured
- Examination of the relationship of all College initiatives to the objectives, the goals and sub-goals, and the six criteria within the *Strategic Plan*

The sale of the College for Financial Planning, Inc., presented an ideal time for the institution to chart its course and define actions required for further success. At the same time, the *Strategic Plan* and the planning process were not merely artifacts of the acquisition. Instead, the College viewed this endeavor as a "living" process—one that guides it in achieving its vision and also enables change as needed to remain consistent with the institution's long-term objectives. These ongoing planning activities also provided evidence that related to the Commission's Criterion Four—*the institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.*

☐ Phase Two: Holding Open Forums

Approximately 100 full-time faculty, administrative, and support personnel work at the College for Financial Planning, Inc., headquarters in Greenwood Village, Colorado. While about one-third of the staff served as members on various self-study subcommittees, the open forums provided opportunities for interaction among all staff.

The first open forum was convened shortly after the *Strategic Plan* was distributed to staff. The forum included a presentation by the President aimed at showing how components within the *Strategic Plan* related to the Commission's GIRs and the Criteria. For example, GIR #1 and GIR #2 were discussed when the vision and mission statements within the College's *Strategic Plan* were presented. Likewise, each Criterion for Accreditation was linked to specific objectives and goals within the *Strategic Plan.* Finally, the actions currently in progress or slated to be implemented by the College to meet its strategic objectives were examined as to whether the College could demonstrate patterns of evidence in meeting the Commission's Criteria. The 30-minute animated PowerPoint presentation concluded with an appeal for ongoing staff input and participation—both in terms of the institution's *Strategic Plan* and throughout the self-study process.

Another open forum featured a presentation by the Self-Study Coordinator that summarized outcomes from the self-study process. This open forum, scheduled three weeks before the onsite visit, reviewed the institution's strengths, challenges, and plans for improvement. Within the presentation, the Commission's expectations for graduate programs, intellectual interaction, student academic achievement, instructional effectiveness, intellectual rigor, and institutional effectiveness were featured individually and followed by an evaluation as to how the College measured up. The 20-minute animated PowerPoint presentation concluded by referring back to the *Strategic Plan* and the critical role it serves in charting our future progress.

☐ Phase Three: Issuing Weekly Newsletters

The Self-Study Coordinator initiated a weekly two-page newsletter six weeks before the scheduled team visit to help staff understand the variety of issues associated with Commission affiliation and through it affiliation with the North Central Association. Six *NCA Talking Points* newsletters were published. The content areas covered in each issue are provided below. An example of one of the College's *NCA Talking Points* newsletter is given in Appendix A.

Volume	Areas Covered
Volume 1, Issue 1	The North Central Association: Who Are They? The Five Criteria for NCA Accreditation: A Summary Forms of Affiliation The Evaluation Process
Volume 1, Issue 2	NCA Accreditation: Frequently Asked Questions The Relationships between the GIRs and the Criteria
Volume 1, Issue 3	1997-98 College for Financial Planning, Inc. Self-Study Report: Do You Know? NCA Criterion One: Patterns of Evidence The College's Request for Institutional Change: Additional Criteria What Are Your Questions?
Volume 1, Issue 4	Guidelines for Distance Education: What the NCA Expects Criterion Two: Patterns of Evidence Distance Education Definition Curriculum and Instruction Evaluation and Assessment Library and Learning Resources Student Services Facilities and Finances Question of the Week: What is the Commission Accrediting?
Volume 1, Issue 5 (see Appendix A)	Assessment of Student Academic Achievement and Institutional Effectiveness Criterion Three: Patterns of Evidence The 1997-98 Self-Study Report: Section that Focuses on Criterion Three Evidence of Student Learning Evidence of Institutional Effectiveness
Volume 1, Issue 6	Meet the NCA Team: A Brief Profile Criterion Four: Patterns of Evidence Criterion Five: Patterns of Evidence

Staff response to the *NCA Talking Points* weekly newsletter was very positive. Many managers held regular meetings with their areas to discuss the information presented in the weekly publication. In addition, each issue of the newsletter attempted to help staff read through and understand numerous aspects within the 1997-98 Self-Study Report.

Rose C. McCallin is Senior Director of the Measurement and Research Department at the College for Financial Planning, Inc., in Greenwood Village, Colo.

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Appendix A

NCA Talking Points

Volume 1, Issue 5 September 3, 1998

Assessment of Student Academic Achievement & Institutional Effectiveness

Focus on Criterion Three

Rose C. McCallin
Self-Study Coordinator

Almost ten years ago, the NCA began its assessment initiativerequiring all accredited institutions to develop programs that assess and document both student academic achievement and institutional effectiveness. The NCAs expectation that all accredited institutions have adequate programs to assess student achievement and institutional quality is now embedded in its Criterion Three:

> ***The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.***

Criterion Three reflects the NCAs primary emphasis upon the educational purposes of its accredited institutions. While higher education institutions often have a number of stated purposes, the NCA expects

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1 Assessment of Student Academic Achievement and Institutional Effectiveness
1 Criterion Three: Evidence
2 Section Five within the 1997-98 Self-Study Report
2 Evidence of Student Learning
2 Evidence of Institutional Effectiveness

Criterion Three: Evidence

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

[Refers to 1997-98 Self-Study Report]

In determining whether the College meets the NCAs Criterion Three for Accreditation, the Evaluation Team generally considers evidence such as:

- Defined, coherent, and intellectually rigorous courses and programs of study [pp. 110-114]
- Programs that require research, use of scholarship, and creative activity [pp. 119-120]
- Programs that require student-to-faculty and student-to-student intellectual interaction [pp. 120-124]
- Programs that show evidence of effective teaching and instruction by qualified faculty [pp. 114-116; Appendix F]
- Programs and courses that use results of internal and external peer review processes to ensure quality [pp. 112-114]
- Mastery of a level of knowledge appropriate to the degree granted [pp. 125-136]
- Transcripts that accurately reflect student learning and follow commonly accepted practices [p. 70]
- Ongoing support for professional development of faculty, staff, & administrators [pp.71-78 & Appx. A]
- Effective student services that support the institutions purposes [pp. 61-70; 82-83; 99-109]
- Staff and faculty service that contributes to the institutions effectiveness [pp.42-47; 50-84]
- Effective delivery of educational and other services to its community [pp. 106-109; 116-119]

continued from page 1

every college or university it accredits to have specific educational purposes that translate into educational offerings and programs of assessment to determine their effectiveness. In addition, the NCA recognizes that almost all higher education institutions have a variety of purposes other than those directly related to teaching and learning. Like student academic achievement, the NCA expects its accredited institutions to state their other purposes and to provide evidence that they are effectively fulfilling them. Taken as a whole, the NCA Evaluation Team will be examining (1) the Colleges activities to assess student achievement and institutional effectiveness over the past four years, (2) its *Research and Assessment Program*, and (3) how the evidence we compile is being used for improvement.

Section Five of the *1996-97 Self-Study Report*

The NCAs Criterion Three for Accreditation is addressed in Section Five of the Colleges self-study report (pp. 85-151). In this section, information is provided about our assessment activities, the evolution and continuing development of our program to determine both student achievement and institutional effectiveness, and the outcomes of our assessment activities since 1994. It is here where we have put forth evidence of what we are doing right along with recommendations for becoming even better. The information and recommendations given in Section Five of the report are derived from systematically-collected dataanalyzed according to scientific methods that aim to ensure objectivity and permit us to make claims about how well our students and our institution is doing.

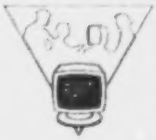
Evidence of Student Learning

The NCA expects accredited institutions to determine the extent to which they contribute to students' learning within three domains:

- Cognitive (Knowledge Acquisition)
- Behavioral (Skill Acquisition)
- Affective (Attitudinal Development)

Examples of typical means to assess *cognitive learning* may include (but are not limited to) mastery of course learning objectives on exams, performance on certification tests, or structured qualitative reviews of student performance on capstone projects. Examples of some ways to determine *behavioral learning* may include gathering and judging evidence of problem solving skills, research competence, or written communication skills. Examples of determining *affective learning* may include surveying attitudes or opinions about the personal and/or professional value of an educationfor instance, asking students and graduates about their opinions of the value of an education in financial planning and comparing the responses of these groups. Page D-2 (Appendix D) shows the components that span the above domains of *student academic achievement* within the Colleges *Research and Assessment Program*.

Evidence of Institutional Effectiveness



Institutional effectiveness is much broader in scope than educational effectiveness. Judging institutional effectiveness is dependent on how well the institution is accomplishing not only its educational purposes, but also all of its other purposes.

Examples are:

- Student progress, student retention, and graduation rates
- Services that support student learning
- Intellectual rigor of the curriculum
- Effective teaching and instruction
- Quality intellectual interaction opportunities
- Effective delivery of the curricula
- Quality professional development offerings
- Professional, scholarly, and public service contributions
- Institutional climate within an organization

Page D-3 (Appendix D) shows the *institutional effectiveness* components within the Colleges *Research and Assessment Program*.

More at the All-Staff Meeting!

CO_2:
Collaborative Organizational Options

Kay Kunst Clawson

The presentation that relates to this paper is designed to help alleviate frustrations and concerns for Self-Study Coordinators. Collaboration and organizational strategies can foster positive changes on a college campus through the self-study process. Collaborative organizational options create a viable self-study that involves many entities of the campus community.

Faculty, staff, and students of the campus community need to be aware of their impact on the education of future generations of college students and realize they are an integral part of the learning environment. It is also necessary to understand the beliefs and attitudes of faculty, staff, and students to effectively implement changes on a college campus. Several studies have addressed the importance of change and how to create positive collaborative efforts.

Hahn (1990) challenged us to really listen when people talk about education. One does not always listen to the subtext in a conversation on teaching and learning and many times that is where the true conversation exits. He suggested we consider listening to the common expressions: designing classroom environments, recognizing the exemplary, assessing learning outcomes, restructuring education and collaborative learning.

Many studies have been conducted on attitudes and beliefs. McCrae (1993) studied the stability of an individual's personality to see if basic feelings and attitudes change over a period of time. This study revealed the need to reconsider situational influences rather than personality traits when analyzing attitudes. Collaborative organizational options need to look for connections among research, networking, and cultures. In the 1990 report on Scholarship Reconsidered, Boyer expressed the following view on collegiate scholarship: "stepping back from one's investigations, looking for connections, building bridges between theory and practice, and communicating one's knowledge effectively to others."

Options Keeping the Collaborative Feeling Alive

☐ **Research**

"Teacher research has been viewed as a powerful mechanism for professional development and school change (Vulliamy & Webb, 1992, p.41)." It is time to combine teaching and research to create a critically reflective culture. Research by Friedreich (1983) showed research influences intervening variables from research to teaching effectiveness. The intervening variables included knowledgeability, intellectual involvement and liveliness, organization, challenge and independent and critical reasoning. The stronger the influence research has on each intervening variable, the greater influence the intervening variable has on education. "Research seems likely to be a more effective means of changing policy and practice in a school and contributing to the wider educational debate if it can become fundamental to the ways of thinking and acting of all its members and valued by those in power positions (Vulliamy & Webb, 1992, p.57)."

Research throughout much of the educational literature is referred to as "action research." Regardless of the name or how it is discussed, research usually follows six sequential steps:

1. Formulating a problem.
2. Planning for data collection.

3. Collecting data,
4. Analyzing data,
5. Reporting results, and
6. Taking action (Hargreaves, 1997).

Action research for successful colleges and universities has started taking on a new thrust called organizational development. The process of organizational self-renewal is called Organizational Development. Organizational Development is a coherent systematically planned self-study (Owens, 309). This process is reflected in the following organizational process that is used to complete a self-study.

Through the organization of the self-study, a "5-Step Plan" could be used to ensure a collaborative effort of encouraging continued change during and after the accreditation process. The five steps included preparation, reflection, inventory, integration, and facilitation. The preparation phase included planning and organizing the campus community into committees consisting of faculty, staff, and students to create a collaborative process. The reflection phase encouraged twenty-five committees to gather existing data, analyze the information, and assess the well being of the campus. The inventory phase is the step where the information collected is synthesized to discover the institutional strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. The integration step and the facilitation step were integrated to be used by various constituents during the strategic planning by the college. This "5-Step Plan" developed during the self-study process was the catalyst that led to modification of the vision of the college.

Research leads to new knowledge in order to expand and broaden employees' views of the campus community. The academic culture in higher education encompasses faculty's, staff's, and students' attitudes and beliefs on the emphasis placed on new ideas through research.

☐ Networking

Educational reform networks are becoming popular because they offer opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to discuss their ideas. According to Lieberman (1996), "networks also replace prescription and compliance with involvement in problem posing, sharing, and solving; discussions that concern actions and consequences; and a culture that encourages continuous inquiry." Networks allow one to organize activities first and then create strategies to support the activities. Leaders encourage change through efforts of facilitation. "When the community grows and deepens, a network becomes an important catalyst for school renewal (Lieberman, 1996)."

Institutions of education tend to allow employees to work in a state of semi-isolation. It is important to develop a deep sense of community. Small group activities create a sense of relationships. The process groups are our vehicle for developing the sorts of relationships that facilitate appropriate change. Self-organization takes place around the core values, beliefs, purposes, and meanings that actually drive people. (Caine & Caine, 1997) Empowerment within the networking process creates a positive change for the employees.

The common core of networks is their ability to bring people together and facilitate the organization of work. Work becomes more collaborative than individualistic allowing for change to be more integrated. Networks create a movement for collaborative change to occur. This is extremely necessary for colleges to analyze effectively their strengths and weaknesses during the self-study.

Collaborative Cultures

Trying to change a culture by forcing an agenda for change is counterproductive. To build a collaborative work culture one must first understand the culture and then facilitate cooperative vision building. Fullan (1992) pointed out eight guidelines for leaders to use with educators working with their communities; these guidelines could be used by Self-Study Coordinators to learn more about their campus communities. These guidelines included:

1. Understand the culture of the school before trying to change it;
2. Value your teachers: promote their professional growth;
3. Extend what you value;
4. Express what you value;

5. Promote collaboration, not cooperation;
6. Make menus, not mandates;
7. Use bureaucratic means to facilitate, not to constrain;
8. Connect with the wider environment.

The academic culture is a powerful influence on faculty, staff, and students. It is time for colleges to decide what and how they want their college to be viewed by society. Faculty need to remember and be reminded that students have a right to a learning environment where they feel most comfortable; one that will help them to achieve their goal of a quality education.

In building a collaborative culture on college campuses it is important for conversations between student and faculty to encourage scholarship of teaching and learning. This process needs to go on outside the classroom. It can be initiated by encouraging the faculty and staff to be interactive with each other and with the students. Encouragement through the self-study review can enhance learning for each culture.

The culture on the campus community could be enhanced if colleges would adhere to certain conditions. In 1984, the National Institute of Education contended that "the quality of undergraduate education could be significantly improved if America's colleges would apply existing knowledge about three critical conditions of excellence—(1) student involvement, (2) high expectations, and (3) assessment and feedback (p.17)." This would provide for conversation between student and faculty to encourage scholarship. Learning is an interactive process of information and faculty need to believe in an active rather than process at the college level.

Collaborative cultures need to be built to create an atmosphere for change on the college campus. The self-study encourages colleges to make a commitment to improvement by being sure the college mission is being accomplished and making all necessary changes. Collaborative cultures make sure the process continues through the cooperative vision building.

Conclusions

An unsettling voice tells us that all our good intentions cannot achieve the goals in higher education while the value system of our culture remains what it is today. Attitudes and beliefs of college faculty, staff, and students are going to be hard to change. "Teacher research seems likely to be a more effective means of changing policy and practice in a school and contributing to the wider educational debate if it can become fundamental to the ways of thinking and acting of all its members and valued by those in power positions (Vulliamy & Webb, 1992, p.57)."

Albert Einstein observed, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." As we recognize the problems through the self-study process it is important for colleges to become proactive in planning and managing change. The change concepts of the past decade have created beliefs that change is a reaction to values and events. Today educational change is a way to empower employees to try new ideas as the culture changes.

Organizations are acting differently than they have in the past and therefore the culture is changing. Change will stabilize over time if we use action research to support new ideas; if we encourage networking among faculty, staff, and students, and if collaborative cultures are nourished. Collaboration with employees and active participation on the part of all constituents will help ensure the development of concrete changes.

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When a C-E Is Not a C-E: NCA Visits to a C-E's Home Campus

David A. Wissmann

Much has been said and written about the roles and responsibilities of Consultant-Evaluators (C-Es) on evaluation visits. Less known are the possible roles and responsibilities of Consultant-Evaluators when their own campus is going through the self-study and evaluation visit process. It is the goal of this short paper to address some of the issues associated with this situation. After an identification of some of the various roles Consultant-Evaluators can hold when their own campus is going through the self-study and evaluation visit process, the paper will identify the strengths and concerns associated with this situation. A concluding section will share a specific strategy where a Consultant-Evaluator can significantly enhance the preparation of her/his home campus for an upcoming evaluation visit.

Alternative Roles for Consultant-Evaluators

The possible roles of the Consultant-Evaluator during the self-study and evaluation visit process are many. These include Self-Study Coordinator, self-study writer/editor, steering committee member, subcommittee member, the role of adviser (either officially or unofficially) and the possibility of no role in the process.

☐ Consultant-Evaluator as Self-Study Coordinator

North Central C-Es can easily be seen as the best possible choice for the position of Self-Study Coordinator. First, the generalist philosophy and training of C-Es by North Central makes this individual well qualified to consider the "big picture," an essential characteristic of the Self-Study Coordinator. In addition, direct knowledge of the specifics of creating a self-study and conducting an evaluation visit make this person uniquely qualified to guide an institution through this process in a smooth and relatively stress-free manner.

The training and experiences of the C-E may also have negative consequences for the institution when the C-E is in the role of Self-Study Coordinator. One possible consequence is that the focus and/or content of the self-study may be limited by a C-E philosophy that is much more focused on reaccreditation and much less focused on overall reflection on the institution's past, present, and future. A second possible consequence is that preexisting relationships between the C-E and other members of the campus community and/or evaluation team members may affect the dynamics of the self-study and the evaluation visit.

☐ Consultant-Evaluator as self-study writer/editor

In those situations where the self-study writer or editor is separate from the Self-Study Coordinator, a North Central C-E can make a significant contribution toward an effective self-study. Through both C-E training and actual C-E comprehensive and focused visit experiences, a C-E can provide a great deal of information concerning what makes a self-study document an effective tool for the evaluation of an institution. In addition, a C-E may also be in a unique position to present the information in a self-study document in a way that is appropriate to both audiences of the document, the campus community and the evaluation team and other Commission staff.

Negative consequences of a C-E in the role of self study writer/editor are similar to those mentioned in the previous section. However, the typical self-study writer/editor is in a much less influential position than that of Self-Study Coordinator.

☐ **Consultant-Evaluator as committee member**

Many institutions choose a self-study process that consists of multiple levels of information gathering and evaluation. One of the more common approaches includes a "steering committee" that oversees the self-study process and makes the final recommendations for the self-study document and various subcommittees that often provide much of the basic descriptive information and initial evaluation. For many C-Es who hold positions on their own campus that are limited to a specific area (such as a faculty member or a staff member of one of the divisions of the institution), serving as a steering committee or subcommittee member may be the best "fit" for their generalist C-E training and their specific campus position.

Steering committee and, especially, subcommittee members have a limited impact on the self-study and evaluation visit process. Having a C-E serve in one of these capacities also limits any possible negative impact of a C-E's influence and/or relationships with either campus members or evaluation team members.

☐ **Consultant-Evaluator as adviser**

Another way that the knowledge and experiences of a C-E can be used is in the role of either official or unofficial adviser. As an official adviser, the C-E may be available not only to the Self-Study Coordinator, but also to the various committees and others involved with the self-study process. Although not recommended, a C-E can also serve as an unofficial adviser to the Self-Study Coordinator. As an official adviser, the role of the C-E in the self-study process can be clearly communicated to the campus community. As an unofficial adviser, the C-E may be viewed as having an inappropriate level of influence to the decision making aspects of the self-study.

Possible negative consequences of a C-E as adviser are greatly affected by the level of influence of the adviser role. When the level of influence is little more than "tweaking" the self-study document, the prospect of negative consequences is very small. Yet, when the level of influence dictates major decisions during the self study process, the prospect of negative consequences is much greater.

☐ **Consultant-Evaluator with no role in the self-study process**

A final choice for institutions is to exclude participation of a C-E in the self study process. At first glance, this choice may seem a lost opportunity to make use of the unique training and experiences of one member of the campus community. Yet, this paper has also noted some potential problems for the institution when a C-E does participate. The next section of the paper presents an additional possible role for a C-E that can be combined with any of the alternative roles discussed above.

The Evaluation Visit Simulation: Another Strategy for C-E Participation

No matter what role an institution decides for their C-E during the self study process, the author would like to conclude this article with an idea. It is the author's belief that a C-E is uniquely qualified to prepare the members of the campus community for the visit by the NCA team. Specifically, it is suggested that the institution create an evaluation visit simulation, with the C-E serving as a hypothetical visiting team member.

After cautioning the campus community about the variety of ways C-Es conduct campus visits, the campus C-E can create an experience where faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, students, and others can:

- ○ become informed of the overall schedule of the visit;
- ○ experience the process of interviewing, using questions that could be asked; and
- ○ get an opportunity where their questions can be addressed by not only the C-E, but also the Self-Study Coordinator and administrators.

Concluding Remarks

Institutions that have a North Central Consultant-Evaluator on the faculty or staff have the opportunity to add another perspective to the self-study and evaluation visit process. This perspective, based on the training and experiences of the C-E, however, has both positive and negative consequences for the institution. The importance of these consequences is affected by the role held by the C-E during the self-study and evaluation visit process.

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What Do Our Constituent Groups Think? Obtaining Third Party Comment

Juan N. Franco
Doreene Ward Alexander

Overview

New Mexico State University (NMSU) is the land-grant institution for the State of New Mexico. Founded in 1888, NMSU is a comprehensive university dedicated to teaching, research, extension education, and service. It is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a Research I University and holds more than $300 million in grants and contracts. The United States Department of Education, under Title III of the Higher Education Act, has designated NMSU a minority institution. NMSU is also designated as a Hispanic serving institution. During the Fall 1998 semester, student headcount enrollment at the main campus was 15,409. Of the enrolled students, 11,891 were in-state, 2,936 were out-of-state, and 582 were classified as international. The university offers both graduate and undergraduate programs. The Graduate School offers 50 areas of study at the master's level, four areas at the specialist in education level, and 24 at the doctoral level. The six undergraduate colleges–Agriculture and Home Economics, Arts and Sciences, Business Administration and Economics, Education, Engineering, and Health and Social Services–offer 74 areas of study. This same semester, full and part-time faculty numbered 896, professional staff numbered 1,027, and 1,466 classified staff.

Commission Policy and the Self-Study Process

NMSU was scheduled for a comprehensive evaluation during the spring of 1998, and preparations for the self-study process began in August 1994. A number of changes related to the North Central Association (NCA) reaccreditation process had occurred during the preceding ten years and needed to be learned, understood, and addressed by the institution during the period of self-study. This paper will address institutional responsibility and compliance with the Commission's policy of increased public visibility and participation in the regional accrediting process.

Soliciting Public Comment

As an institution involved in a comprehensive evaluation process, NMSU was required to weave the solicitation of third party comment into the self-study process. NMSU saw this requirement for the solicitation for third party comment as both a learning experience and an opportunity to gain feedback from its various constituent groups. The initial step in this process was understanding why this requirement had been implemented by NCA. The *Handbook of Accreditation* (1997) included an explanation of the Commission's policy as well as the manner in which the Commission intended to meet this federal requirement. Clarification of institutional questions was accomplished through a variety of ways including attendance at appropriate NCA Annual Meeting sessions, reviewing the *Handbook of Accreditation* and other pertinent literature, and interacting with NCA staff. Talking with persons from other institutions that had completed comprehensive evaluation to learn how they had complied with this policy was also valuable. Thus the initial efforts of NMSU involved gaining an understanding of the Commission's policy and then deciding how best to comply with the policy.

Once this was done, the next step was to orient the Self-Study Steering Committee members to the expectation of the Commission's third party comment policy and requested their assistance. It was through the work of the Steering Committee that the various internal and external constituencies were delineated and suggestions were made to encourage constituent awareness and participation. The constituent groups identified included executive and college administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the public. It was believed that each of these constituencies had a commitment to and vested interest in the institution and its future.

The first constituents to be oriented to the Commission policy and the institution's implementation plan included the executive administration, deans' and administrative councils, associate/assistant deans and directors, and department heads. Executive and college administration, members of the Steering Committee, and the Program Review Coordinator oriented other constituent groups, such as faculty and students. Education and explanation of the process to all constituent groups included the components of identification and explanation of the Commission's policy. An invitation was then extended to encourage the constituents to provide public comment to NCA.

Strategies for Requesting Constituency Participation

Strategies utilized for requesting constituency participation included: notices in appropriate newspapers (regional, community, student, and alumni), a notice on the NMSU home page; e-mail and fax notices; and oral communications. Each notice contained the purpose and scheduled dates of the team visit, current institutional accreditation status, and the necessary information for the submission of input to the Commission office. Factors considered in the dissemination of these notices included such concerns as cost, frequency of publication, and documentation of notice publication. All of the above notifications occurred four or more months prior to the site visit. Copies of all notices were forwarded to the NCA office as requested.

NMSU elected to meet and then exceed the NCA stated requirements regarding soliciting public comment. In addition to public notices, NMSU held open forums during the site visit. The open forums were seen as another component of the university's continuing commitment to be accessible to its constituencies. This allowed the site visitors to receive input directly from the institution's constituencies. Three simultaneous open forums were publicized and held for students, faculty, and staff. Each forum provided the opportunity for the site visitors to learn from these constituencies as well as for the constituents to gain an understanding of the accreditation process.

Receiving Third Party Comment

While NMSU assured that public comment had been properly requested, NCA was responsible for providing copies of received comments meeting the designated criteria to the university president two weeks prior to the team visit. The president had an opportunity to review these comments prior to the team visit and then to discuss them with the team visit chair during the visit. The institution viewed the reception of these comments as a mechanism to gain feedback about its public's perception.

Site Team Feedback

The site visit team evaluated the institution's efforts to comply with this Commission policy and provided a written response within the team report. The team examined NMSU's attempts to obtain public comment in a variety of ways including the review of notice content, strategies used for dissemination of notices, and participation in the open forums.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the adopted Commission policy related to public comment did provide the institution with a challenge to ensure that the policy was interpreted correctly and selected strategies would accomplish the desired goal. Compliance with the policy was not difficult since NMSU has been gathering data from its constituents via a variety of mechanisms over a number of years. Requesting third party comment as a component of the reaccreditation process was a useful tool in assisting NMSU in meeting its goal of continued institutional improvement. Valuable knowledge was gained both from the comments received but the process itself was also enlightening.

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Connecting the Present to the Past and the Future: Using Longitudinal Research In Self-Study

Richard Reitsma

Introduction

The institutional self-study that looks exclusively at the present state of a college only gives a static snapshot of the institution; it does not point a light into the darkness of the future. In the current climate of radical change that is affecting all educational institutions, it is critical to glimpse into the future. But because past, present, and future are in a continuum, an understanding of the past is essential. The ability to have a vision for the future depends directly on a clear view and understanding of the past. As the French social historian Lefebvre has observed; "History, science of the past [is also] science of the future."

The past is not, however, automatically a guide for the future because the big picture trends of bygone years are usually smothered in the infinitely complex web of events that shape the memory of the past. The job of accurately portraying those trends and placing them into an institutional self-study is a challenge that only few people engaged in the institutional self-study decide to take on (Nichols 1996). Those who are prepared dialog with the past of their institution bring an immeasurably rich resource to their study. This article is a theoretical and practical guide from which self-study writers who want to dialog with the past can glean a few concepts, ideas, and practical tips.

We will begin by briefly looking at the two traditions of research which, in combination, have paved the way to such a dialog between the past, present, and future–using longitudinal research. Secondly we will show how the theoretical principles were put into practice when the research was done for the Northwestern College library self-study (Reitsma 1998). In the third section we will briefly review some of the practical ways that coherence can be brought into complex longitudinal data. In the fourth and final section we will review some practical ways that any self-study writers can initiate a dialog between the past, present, and future by using longitudinal data.

Theoretical Foundations for Longitudinal Research

Longitudinal research, identified as such, first became an accepted tool for behavioral scientists in the 1960s. Glen Elders, one of the first sociologists who made effective use of this new research method, observed that longitudinal research has had a revolutionary impact on the fields of sociology, psychology, and education during the last three decades. It was revolutionary because it added depth to breadth (Elder 1993). Traditional sociologists only looked at problems such as poverty to see how widespread the problem was. Elder shows that researchers who used longitudinal methods successfully analyzed patterns of poverty in successive decades and were able to sketch the evolution of the problem. One example that Elder uses to illustrate the revolutionary impact of the longitudinal research is the Michigan Panel Study of Income Dynamics. Before that research was started–in the early 1960s–many sociologists had not questioned the popular old truism "once poor always poor." In the Michigan study that notion was put to the test by tracking the individual lives of 6000 families over a period of several decades. In the end it was decided that the truism was false because poverty is an enduring condition, in the sense of lasting beyond a single year, for very few people (Elder 1993, p.v.).

The French Annales school of social and historical research is a second tradition of research that has the potential for helping institutional self-study writers engage in a fruitful dialog involving the past, present, and future. Scholars in this tradition, such as Lefebvre, Bloch, and Braudel, not only stressed the need for discovering and bringing long-range historical trends to the forefront of analysis, but were also keenly aware that historic events interact with those trends. While looking for the long-range patterns or structures of the past they knew that important events such as cataclysms (wars, accidents, or economic disasters) or personnel changes can bring major changes to those patterns.

The enduring legacy of the Annales School of historic research is that they brought the fields of history and sociology to the same playing field.

Collecting Longitudinal Data for the Library Self-Study

- ◇ **Compiling data: Setting the time frame.** Northwestern College became a four-year liberal arts institution in the early 1960s and Ramaker Library, the college library, was built in 1962. The building, along with a collection of quality books, articles, and AV resources, was viewed as a necessary part of an institution that was to honor the liberal arts tradition. Thirty-five years have brought many changes to the library and its collection. The objective of my 1997 library self-study was to track the 35 years of change and to place the evolving needs of the library within the context of the larger strategic plan for the future of Northwestern College. What should be the place of the library within the planned new financial campaign of the college? What enduring strengths and persistent weaknesses should be built on and addressed in the planning process?

- ◇ **Compiling data: Follow the money.** The core of the library self-study is a careful tabulation of all the actual annual library budgets between the years 1962 and 1998. Obtaining a complete set of those actual budgets was impossible because of system changes and lack of depth in record preservation. However, many of the budgets for missing years were recovered from an array of different places such as in past grant applications or papers of past presidents. For some years only fragments of the budgets could be reconstructed from reports sent to external agencies. When all the data sources had been exhausted and there were still small gaps in my data streams it was not difficult to make estimates based on documented patterns.

- ◇ **Compiling data: Resources purchased and use.** It was often difficult to reconstruct all the actual budgets that took shape during the 35 years of the life of Ramaker Library because records were incomplete and record keeping methods changed with time. Other library statistics such as the numbers of books and journals purchased during each of the successive years was easier to retrieve. Book circulation statistics had also been carefully recorded for all of the 35 years of Ramaker Library.

- ◇ **Compiling data: User surveys.** Ramaker Library conducted written user satisfaction surveys in the beginning of each of the last three decades (1970, 1980 and 1990). The detailed written responses to the various questions provide valuable longitudinal data about user perceptions of the library and its changing function in the life of the college. The changes and persistence in both the questions and answers provided a historic perspective on the changing nature of Ramaker Library.

- ◇ **Compiling data: Institution-changing events.** There were many incidental events that had an impact on the evolution of Ramaker Library but, in the self-study, we only elaborated on them when they seemed to have an enduring impact on the library. We noted all the library personnel changes that occurred during the 35 year time frame. It was also obvious that the overall changes in the financial health of the college had a direct impact on the library. Two times of financial stress (early 1970s and early 1980s) had long lasting impact on the library budgets. Developments toward automation within the college and the library continues to bring changes to the library. All such events were incorporated into the picture of the library much in the way that the Annales scholars integrate events into long-term historical trends.

Analyzing the Data

Long strings of numbers are of little value if they are not organized so that they have something to say. This can be done by using ratios and constant measures such as price indexes and external standards.

- ◇ **Crunching numbers: Using price indexes.** The self-study researcher who wishes to follow the money trail must decide which price inflation indexes should be used to convert past budgets so that consistent dollars are used. The consumer price index is, of course, the most frequently used index; but one could also use the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI). For the library environment one might even considering using the University Library Price Index (ULPI) (1998).

- **Crunching numbers: Incorporating ratios.** Once the budget dollars have been converted into consistent units such as constant 1983 dollars, then the researcher must take one additional step. Library numbers must be compared to vital institutional data such as student enrollment numbers or total institutional budgets (E &G). The outcome of such comparison might produce a graph depicting library budgets in the form of the amount of money spent per student or tabulating circulation statistics in the form of average numbers of books checked out per student. (see App. I and II). The value of such constant data units is that summary comparisons are easy to see. A quick glance at the two graphs shows that, in general, when budgets are cut, library usage also suffers.

- **Crunching numbers: Incorporating external standards.** The ACRL (Association for Colleges and Research Libraries) (1998) standards for college libraries has, for decades, functioned as the norm for college libraries. It outlines the preferred size of the library as well as the level of staffing. The Ramaker Library self-study incorporated that measure into its report and illustrated how, over time, the library had approached or veered away from those standards. In an age of change it is valuable to make flexible use of existing standards.

Concluding Observations: Value and Dangers of Longitudinal Research

- **College archives.** The longitudinal method relies heavily on the maintenance of archival records that clearly and comprehensively reflect the past activities of an institution. As colleges move more and more of their administrative systems to electronic systems that will not happen by chance but calls for consistent planning.

- **Duration of data profiles.** The strength of longitudinal data is largely based on the historic depth achieved. In the case of the Ramaker Library study it became evident that a few years of institutional financial distress in the early 1970 had an only incidental impact on the library. The farm crisis years of the early 1980, on the other hand, had an enduring impact on the library. The effect lasted much longer than its impact on the college as a whole.

- **Precision of data profiles.** Self-study writers are often pressed for time and, as a consequence, grasp for incidental pieces of information from the past in order to give a historic flavor to their study. This cut-and-paste method cuts off dialog with the past because the modern writer is not allowing the past to have a voice. The past must be reconstructed as completely as possible to in order to generate dialog between it, the present and the future. For the Ramaker Library self-study completeness involved the reconstruction of, among other, 35 years of budgets, circulation, and acquisitions.

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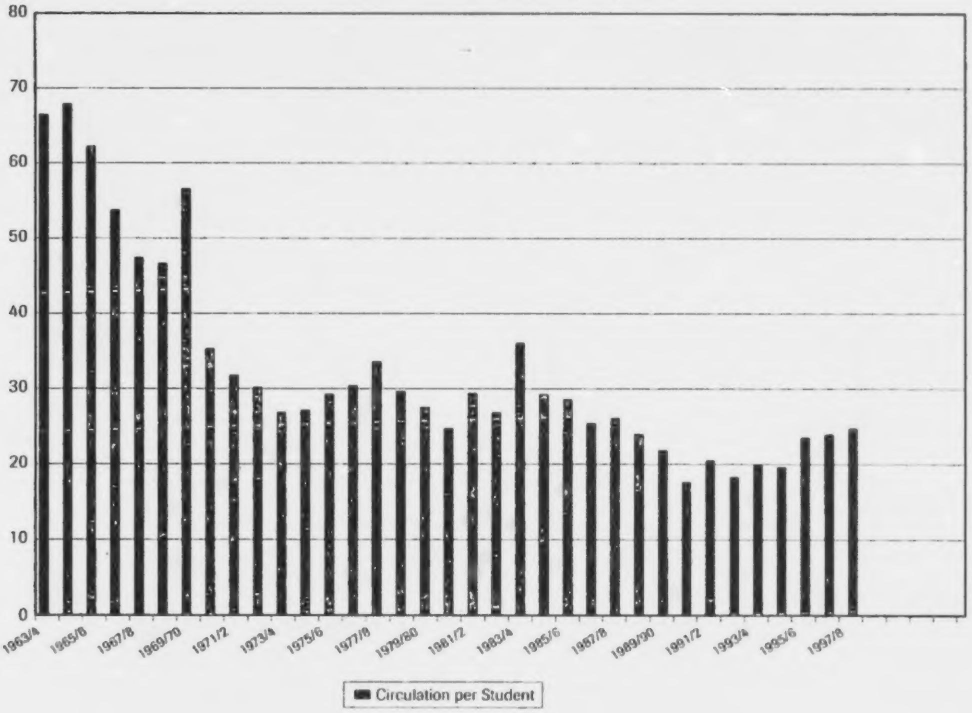
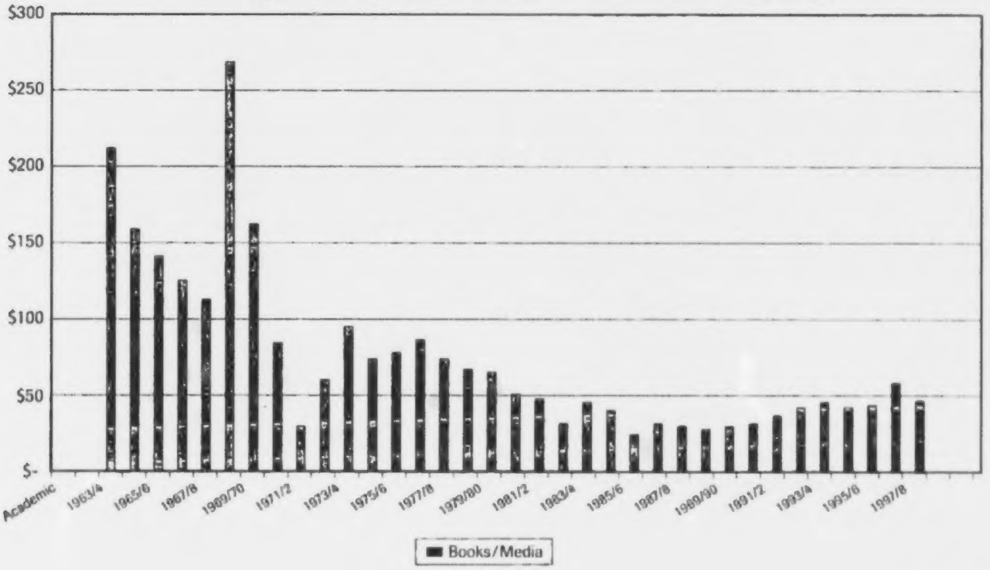
Appendix

Annual Book Circulation (Per Student)



Books and Media: Total Spent Per Sudent in 1983 Dollars (Per Student)



An Evaluation Theory-Driven Conceptual Framework for Self-Study

Ann Martin

When one considers that the self-study for accreditation is a process that involves self-evaluation of the college or university, it is ironic that the evaluation context, although assumed and practiced, has not been published extensively in the higher education literature. While the annual *A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement* offers many excellent examples and formats for self-study design and implementation, other than the information in the *Handbook of Accreditation,* 2nd Edition (1997), there have not been published evaluation frameworks to guide institutions as they begin to draft their *Self-Study Plans.* This is not to say that the vast assessment literature does not provide guidance for self-study; likewise, organizational and management theories provide useful insights for the design of the self-study process and motivational concerns. However these only address parts of the process and not its entirety. Strategic planning, while it addresses some of the objectives of self-study, produces a purposeful document very different from a *Self-Study Report.*

The self-study process, because it needs to encompass almost all aspects of institutional structure and function, presents special challenges for the newly appointed Self-Study Coordinator and the steering committee. The Self-Study Plan needs to provide for a process tailored to each institution's unique characteristics while addressing the commonalities shared by all institutions of higher education. Moreover, the process must lead to an evaluative Self-Study Report that goes far beyond the tasks of inventorying resources, discussing assessment activities, and describing planning initiatives. To produce an evaluative Report with a minimum emphasis on the purely descriptive, steering committees are challenged to frame the self-study process as an undertaking in evaluation of the college or university as a whole rather than the sum of the assessments of its parts.

To address this need, this paper proposes a conceptual framework for accreditation self-study that is grounded in program evaluation theory. Closer examination of the proposed conceptual framework reveals a high degree of congruency with NCA's five Criteria for Accreditation and provides a format for institutional self-study that is applicable to the diverse population of colleges and universities. By offering this conceptual framework, I hope to begin to address a common deficiency in self-studies: that because the evaluation process itself is unclear, the reports tend to be too descriptive and lack evaluative analysis.

Chen's (1990) seminal work on theory-driven program evaluation offers a detailed framework that can be adapted for accreditation self-study. Here Chen defines theory as "a set of interrelated assumptions, principles, and/or propositions to explain or guide social actions" (p. 40). There exists a duality in program theory: descriptive theory and prescriptive theory. This duality of program theory, according to Chen, links descriptive theory with scientific concerns, such as cause and effect, and prescriptive theory with practical concerns, such as what must be done to improve the program. Together, these lead to a unified statement of program theory as *"a specification of what must be done to achieve the desired goals, what other important impacts may also be anticipated, and how these goals and impacts would be generated."* The prescriptive part of program theory, which is related to what should be, is defined in Chen (1990) as normative theory; the descriptive portion is called causative theory. Of these two parts, normative theory fits well into self-study. For the most part, causative theory, does not play a central role in self-study although it may serve a purpose in student assessment projects in some institutions that seek to uncover cause and effect relationships of factors to explain student outcomes.

Chen's Normative theory has three basic patterns called domains; each domain has its own theory that directs evaluation conceptualization, design, and activities. The three domains of normative theory are: Normative Outcome Theory, Normative Treatment Theory, and Normative Implementation Environment Theory. Each of these theories and how each relates to the NCA Criteria for Accreditation will be discussed in turn. While the names may appear intimidating and not at all relevant to self-study for accreditation, as we will see, conceptually there are strong linkages with these three domains and the five Criteria for Accreditation as shown in Table One.

Table 1
Linkage of Chen's Normative Evaluation Theory with the Self-Study Process

Chen's Normative Theory Domain	Evaluation Processes Described by Chen	NCA Criteria for Accreditation
Normative Outcome Theory	Identification and clarification of goals and outcomes.	Chapter 1: Mission and Purposes
Normative Treatment Theory	Assessment of congruency between resources, services, and activities necessary and whether they are present.	Chapter 2: Resources Chapter 3: Student Assessment Program
Normative Implementation Environment Theory	Analysis of congruence between what should be happening and what is actually happening, and from this identification of problems and their solutions.	Chapter 3: Institutional Effectiveness Chapter 4: Planning for the Future Chapter 5: Integrity

Normative Outcome Theory and Evaluation

Normative Outcome Evaluation is a systematic identification and clarification of goals or outcomes (Chen, 1990, p.54). This domain relates to NCA Criterion One: mission identification and clarification. Usually prior to or at the onset of self-study, the institution's mission and purposes are revisited, reviewed, or revised if necessary, and in turn provide the normative outcomes for NCA Criteria Two, Three, and Four.

NCA also requires that the purposes flow from the mission, that the purposes are appropriate for higher education, that the constituents (stakeholders) understand the purposes and mission, and that the mission and purposes inform decision-making processes at the institution. Moreover, NCA requires that the statement of purposes should affirm freedom of inquiry, explain the combination of academic programs, communicate the expected learning of students, support the breadth and depth of educational programs, and commit to teaching excellence. It is interesting to note that evaluation according to Chen's Normative Outcome Theory can lead to findings very similar to the NCA patterns of evidence.

While NCA Criterion One coincides with Chen's Normative Outcome Theory, using this framework, this initial phase of the self-study should be completed before evaluation of subsequent NCA Criteria is begun, especially if mission statements are revised. Other implications are that self-study under this framework is a sequentially ordered process and that committees should be structured accordingly. In 1995, the self-study committees at Mount Senario College were organized around sequential phases of the self-study as well as focal areas of the institution. The intent was to have the Mission Committee revisit the mission; once it was ratified by the Board of Trustees, members of the Mission Committee were reassigned to serve on other committees, thus giving a continuity to the process.

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Normative Treatment Theory and Evaluation

The idea of "treatment" in higher education may appear far-fetched; however, Chen defines treatment as not necessarily being something done to a program client. Treatment can also include program activities, organized services, materials or activities that are directly delivered to clients in order to generate the expected change (Chen, 1990, p. 102). Extending this definition to higher education, normative treatment would include the resources of the institution as well as the educational programs and other purposes. Chen states that normative treatment evaluation refers to the assessment of the congruency between normative *(what-ought-to-be)* treatment and implemented *(what-is)* treatment. The following paragraphs examine in turn NCA Criteria Two, Three, and Four, and begin to structure linkages adopting Chen's definitions.

Criterion Two is sometimes called the "Resource Criterion" in that it specifies that there must be effectively organized governance and administration, faculty and staff, financial resources, and the physical resources necessary for an institution of higher education. Chen admits that treatment is a complex concept that also involves implementation and lists several reasons for this observation. One that is pertinent to higher education is his fourth reason, "Problems in creating and maintaining an effective implementation organization for treatment delivery and evaluation purposes." (Chen, p.108). Loose coupling (Weick, 1976) of the higher education system, faculty autonomy, and the organized anarchy (Cohen and March, 1974) of most higher education organizations make evaluation difficult even under the best of circumstances. Perhaps this explains why that in the past, the resources of an institution had played an important part of accreditation evaluation. Resources were more easily inventoried without intrusion into faculty work while process and outcome measurements were more difficult to obtain. Currently and rightly so, policy analysts have come to the conclusion that seat time in a properly equipped room with a credentialed instructor does not automatically result in student learning. While resources are important as measures of inputs, and minimal specific resources are necessary for learning, an inventory of resources only describes the environment and inputs, and does not evaluate the process or effectiveness of the utilization of these resources. By applying Chen's Normative Treatment Theory to Criterion Two, steering committees can begin to evaluate the effectiveness of resource allocation and utilization within the institution.

Criterion Three begins to address the process and outcomes of the educational enterprise. The primary pattern of evidence is that of the student assessment program. Here we begin to converge on Chen's definition of Normative Treatment Evaluation: the congruence of treatment with implementation. For the first time, the newly revised *Handbook of Accreditation* specifies dimensions of student assessment that include congruence with mission and purposes, ownership of the faculty (stakeholders), feedback loops for program improvement, and methods of gathering data and information. Part of the student assessment program is to document student learning in the general education curriculum as well as in the major. General education is important because it represents the common ground of core educational experiences that characterize a college student of that institution. For this reason, it should be philosophically linked with the mission and purposes of the institution as well as student outcomes that are expressed as objectives or goals of the general education program. If these goals are normative *(what-ought-to-be)*, then the student assessment program evaluates the reality of student learning *(what-is)*.

How does normative treatment theory link with self-study? The *Handbook of Accreditation* (1997) provides some insight with a new section that articulates the expectations of self-study and peer review. In this section, it becomes evident that this is actually Normative Treatment Evaluation in that there must be congruence between the goals *(what-ought-to-be)* and the reality *(what-is)*. On page 49, the *Handbook* states that it is critical to the evaluation whether or not the institution

- understands both its central educational purposes and the information necessary to confirm that it achieves them,
- understands the values of higher education and can show that its activities successfully reflect and transmit those values,
- both understands and strives to fulfill all of its various stated purposes, and
- understands the relationship between its resources and programs and its achievements.

By this point, it should be apparent that Chen's Normative Treatment Evaluation provides a powerful framework on which to base both self-study and student outcome assessment, the latter being an important part of self-study. The idea of evaluating the congruence takes self-study away from the former laundry-list inventory of resources and goals to a dynamic inspection of whether or not the goals are actually being met. However, for an effective formative self-study process, this is not enough. The sources of problems should be identified and from this, plans to address these problems should lead to the addressing the NCA Criterion Four, which has also been called the "Future Criterion."

Normative Implementation Environment Theory and Evaluation

Lastly, we move to the next normative theory developed by Chen: the Normative Implementation Environment Theory and its evaluation. Chen writes (p. 117) that for an understanding of what has gone wrong, the normative implementation environment evaluation is necessary. Chen goes on to write (p. 119) that by indicating differences between the normative and the actual implementation environment, feedback to the administrators and stakeholders will allow immediate corrective action to be undertaken. Clearly, this is one of the purposes of self-study: to provide the means for institutional improvement before the summative evaluation for accreditation is conducted by the Peer Review system. Normative Implementation Environment Theory and Evaluation also provides the means to examine issues related to integrity, the area of NCA's fifth criterion. Corrective action in this context should be systemic, more than a "it will be taken care of" assurances written into the Self-Study Report. Getting at the root sources of incongruency involves analysis and possible systematic reconceptions rather than a reactive patchwork repair job. This is clearly a future-oriented process, and so it is appropriate to mention here that Chen also relates normative implementation environment evaluation to planning, which is one of the more important issues of Criterion Four, the "Future Criterion."

While strategic planning initiatives fulfill much of Criterion Four, self-study can be enhanced by applying several related dimensions of implementation environment theory and evaluation as proposed by Chen (1990). Some examples of these dimensions and their applicability to self-study will be presented in the session.

By selecting dimensions appropriate to the institution, the steering committee can tailor the evaluation of Criteria Four and Five by assessing the congruency between the normative and the actual dimensions. First the normative implementation environment is specified and then the assigned committee begins to collect data to compare. If incongruency is found, this may point to problems in implementation. If these problems are discovered early in the evaluation, corrective measures can be taken. In self-study, the ideal is to implement systemic corrective measures far in advance of the site visit rather than to give the appearance of a last minute quick fix. By using normative implementation environment evaluation in self-study, any institution can do purposeful evaluations that result in strengthening of the college or university.

In conclusion, this paper proposes a conceptual framework for accreditation self-study that is grounded in program evaluation theory and adopted for institutions of higher education. There exists a great deal of congruence between NCA's five Criteria for Accreditation and Chen's (1990) Normative Program Theory and Evaluation. The session will review this framework and offer practical suggestions and examples for its use.

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The Writing Experience: What Works and What Does Not

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This paper will address our recent experience in writing the NCA Self-Study Report. It will discuss three major steps in this process: steering committee activity prior to the writing of individual study committee reports, writing of individual study committee reports, and writing the self-study. The paper will further discuss techniques that worked and did not work in each phase of the process.

Writing Process

☐ Steering Committee activity as it relates to the writing process

The Steering Committee determined that the Self-Study Report would be written based on individual study committee reports. To facilitate the writing of individual study committee reports and to give each study committee a starting point for research, a list of study questions was developed based on the five North Central Association Criteria for Accreditation and the General Institutional Requirements. Once the individual study committees were established, the Steering Committee determined which study committee should address each individual question and distributed these questions to the study committee chairpersons, who were members of the Steering Committee. These activities took place in November of 1996, two years before the NCA visit.

☐ Writing of individual study committee reports

Each individual study committee handled the writing of its report differently. However, for consistency's sake all committees were given formatting and terminology guidelines to follow. The Curriculum and Educational Programs Study Committee proceeded as follows:

1. The programs to be covered were divided among committee members.
2. A chart was developed to show which questions applied to the various curriculum and educational programs.
3. Individual members of the study committee were assigned to gather information pertaining to their portion of the report.
4. Individual members of the study committee submitted the information they found to the committee chairperson.
5. The committee chairperson compiled the information and submitted it in rough draft form to the study committee members for feedback.
6. The committee chairperson then wrote the final study committee report.
7. The study committee report was submitted to the Steering Committee in November of 1997.

☐ Writing the Self-Study Report

The writing team consisted of the Self-Study Coordinator and two members of the Steering Committee. The team used the following process:

1. Disks containing the individual study committee reports were submitted to the Self-Study Coordinator.
2. The Self-Study Coordinator and one member of the writing team condensed each individual study committee report into a Self-Study Report section.
3. The third member of the writing team then read the condensed section. It should be noted that this member had not seen the individual study committee report.
4. The entire writing team met to revise the condensed section based on the third member's input.
5. This section was then distributed to the college for input via e-mail as an attachment. Deadlines for input were established.
6. The final revision was completed based on input from the college community.

An addendum to the Self-Study Report was required to address changes that occurred at the college after the study committees had completed their reports. These changes were the result of new presidential leadership beginning in the summer of 1997. The addendum was written by the vice president of academic and student affairs during the summer of 1998.

Successful Strategies

1. The use of study questions as guidelines for the study committees gave each committee direction, guidance, and a starting point.
2. By providing each study committee formatting and terminology guidelines, a degree of consistency was ensured; and the writing team found it necessary to make few style decisions.
3. The use of the individual study committee reports as the basis for the Self-Study Report provided the writing team with the necessary resource material, thus eliminating the need for further research.
4. The use of two individuals to write the final Self-Study Report proved that the old adage, "Two heads are better than one," is indeed true. Collaboration enabled the writers to exchange ideas, discuss critical points, and make decisions more easily.
5. The objective reaction of the third member of the writing team to each condensed section of the Self-Study Report provided a fresh perspective. This member had never read the individual study committee reports prior to critiquing the work of the other writing team members.
6. Soliciting input from the college community (board members, administrators, faculty, staff, and students) provided valuable insights.

Challenges

1. One half of the study committees were unable to meet the deadline for submission of their reports to the Self-Study Coordinator. As a result, the writing team had to write sections of the report out of sequence in order to meet the final deadline for submitting the Self-Study Report to the publisher.
2. Distribution methods proved to be unreliable and cumbersome. After experimenting with several techniques, it was determined that distribution worked most effectively as an attachment to e-mail.
3. Some study committee reports were submitted with incomplete data. This resulted in those study committees having to revise their reports. This delayed the writing team further.

4. Even though formatting styles and terminology were consistent with the provided guidelines, writing styles varied widely. It became a challenge for the writing team to incorporate individual study committee reports into one document that flowed well.

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Data ARE... Practicalities Relevant to Writing the Self-Study

Kathryn Heltne Swanson

We have all probably cautioned someone, "It's not *what* you say, but *how* you say it." We might have even tried to impress upon our students the importance of writing well by telling them stories of essay exams we have read, for example, in which two students seemed to know approximately the same amount of material, but the one who constructed the clearest and better written essay received a higher grade than the student who wrote less skillfully. The same can be true for North Central Self-Study Reports. Of course, it matters *what* you say in your document, but it is also extremely important *how* you say it. As someone who has fairly recently written a successful Self-Study Report and who has made several site visits as a Consultant-Evaluator, I proposed this practical session of do's and don't regarding the actual writing of the Self-Study Report.

Tone

The tone of the Self-Study Report narrative refers to the attitude of the writer toward his/her audience. Writers should strive for a tone that is honest, free from propaganda, and clear and concise. In order to achieve such a tone, writers must remember that their readers are peers, fellow educators who will understand some of the necessary jargon of the profession, but who may not know an institution's particular language and abbreviations. Therefore, the writer must walk a fine line and avoid a patronizing, lofty tone, as well as—at the other extreme—a too-familiar, chatty position. In other words, find a balance between a position that says, in essence, to the reader, "Let me tell you about the noble profession of higher education" and one that reads, "Hey, we're all in this together, right?"

Another piece of advice regarding tone is to avoid propaganda. The Self-Study Report is not meant as a public relations piece, but as an honest self reflection. You rarely will fool readers by breezy assumptions and assertions that indicate (or state) that there are absolutely no problems at your institution. It is much more reasonable to state issues you are working to solve, to describe steps you are taking, and to list outcomes you hope to achieve. For example, a statement such as "The support program for Native American students at this university brings in more students, more money, and more positive community support than any other program on campus" is impossible to document adequately and therefore does nothing to impress your readers. Similarly, using the Self-Study Report to promote a particular agenda is also inappropriate. Avoid such overt, and unsubstantiable, pats on the back as "The Elementary Education Department at Imaginary University prepares future teachers much more effectively than similar programs at any other university." Also, be very aware of some contributors' need to plead their cases via the Self-Study Report, as in a statement such as "The Pan-Afrikan support program offers students higher quality programming than any of the other support programs on campus and thus should have its budget at least doubled for the next academic year."

Remember that your audience is a group of peers, people who understand and experience first hand each day the issues in higher education. Thus, you can make some assumptions about their level of understanding and can refrain from defining some terms that you might have to clarify for a different audience.

As you consider audience and appropriate tone, clarity is key. There are some important pointers as you work for greater clarity:

◇ **Avoid wordiness.** More is not better, neither in numbers of words or numbers of syllables. Thus, revise a cumbersome statement such as this, "There is at Imaginary University an Academic Advising Center that at the present time conscientiously and regularly seeks to provide the minimum essentials related to the provision of support for students as they pursue their academic pursuits" to one that is more clear, such as "The Academic Advising Center provides regular academic support."

◇ **Eliminate redundancy.** Although this point is similar to the caution regarding wordiness, redundancy here refers to content, rather than to specific words and phrases. Sometimes it is necessary to repeat information if it is relevant and necessary to substantiate a point in a few different places in your report, but work to minimize such repetition. Decide where in the Self-Study Report it is most reasonable to place a particular piece of information and then simply use cross-references when that information is related to other sections in your report.

◇ **Use active rather than passive verbs.** When subjects actually are present in sentences and are doing the action, the work, of the sentence, the document is more interesting and lively than when objects receive the action of the sentence. For example, avoid a passive construction such as "It was decided by the student government that all student officers be given a regular stipend for work that has been completed by them during the course of an academic year." Rather, rewrite the sentence and use the active voice, as in, "The student government decided to pay a regular stipend to all student officers for the work they do during each academic year."

◇ **Check for parallel construction.** The advice regarding parallelism means that all similar parts of a sentence—a list, a table, chart, or graph—should be in the same form. For example, the following sentence lacks parallelism and thus causes some confusion for the reader: "The Counseling Center assists students with personal, social, and emotional issues and when they need advice regarding academic matters." It is much clearer if stated, "The Counseling Center assists students with personal, social, emotional, and academic issues."

When constructing lists, as in strengths and concerns, for example, likewise be sure that each item on the list follows the same form.

Following is a list that is not parallel, and thus not as clear and concise as it might be.

Goals and objectives guiding the Inter-Collegiate Athletic Program:

- To provide nine women's sports that are competitive…
- To project a positive image to the public.
- Ensuring the safety of all participants by…
- Emphasizing the educational mission of…
- All participants adhere to the philosophy of…

This list can be simply corrected by starting each bullet item with an *-ing* word or an infinitive, e.g., *to provide, to project, to ensure, to emphasize, to educate all participants.*

◇ **Work on sentence variety.** It is helpful to readers to find some variety, whether it be in diction or syntax. Thus, try to avoid all simple (or all compound or complex, for that matter) sentences. No matter how interesting the content, readers will become bored very quickly if every sentence begins with "There is…" "There are…" or if every other sentence is laced with such weak intensifiers as "very," "really." Silly as it might make you feel to do this, try reading at least some sections of the Self-Study Report aloud. Listen to what you hear. If you notice a consistent and predictable pattern, change it! Combine some sentences, perhaps; break up the format with lists and bullets; deliberately vary the sentence structure you use throughout the document.

Grammar, Mechanics, and Punctuation

Once you are sure you have the content and the style as you want them, then go through the document carefully for errors in grammar, mechanics, and punctuation. Following are some of the most common errors to eliminate.

◇ **Sentence fragments.** These are incomplete sentences. They lack either a subject or a verb, and are often caused by using *-ing* verbs alone, or by allowing a dependent clause to stand alone, i.e., a clause beginning with "when," "while," "since," "because," "although," "who," "which," for example. Beware also of semi-colons. They are extremely useful as a means of adding variety to your document's syntax, but must be used as you would a period, to mark **independent** clauses.

These are sentence fragments caused by the errors noted above:

> "No system is perfect, of course, and there have been challenges with this new course schedule. *Courses running on the 75-minute, four-days-per-week format.*"

> "The administration was highly receptive to the proposal but noted that an immediate adoption of eight-week terms would cause significant financial hardship. *Since entering and returning students had already been billed. . .*"

> "The Academic Affairs Committee met regularly during the Fall term to approve the changes in the General Education curriculum; *changes that were somewhat controversial.*"

◇ **Run-on sentences (or sentence splice).** This error is opposite to the sentence fragment because a run-on sentence, rather than being an incomplete sentence, is actually two or more sentences joined by a comma. The solution is usually to revise by using a period or a semicolon. Again, be sure that the clauses on each side of the semi-colon have both a subject and a verb.

For example:

> "At this time, 30 of the 45 full-time faculty hold terminal degrees, *28 of these are doctorates.*"

> "The University adapted programs due to loss of revenue, *however, the associate and baccalaureate curriculum was maintained solely on grant funding.*"

◇ **Tense consistency.** Generally, the Self-Study Report is written primarily in the present tense when the writer is describing current policies and issues. Past tense, of course, denotes history of the institution. A problem may occur, however, when the document reflects the work of several writers and consistency of verb tenses has not been carefully monitored. Reading aloud makes such errors very apparent, but writers can save substantial amounts of time by discussing and clarifying verb tenses ahead of time.

◇ **Person consistency.** The use of first person ("I," "we"), second ("you"), or third ("he/she", "the institution/it") can become problematic if writers do not pay attention to style. Generally, it is best to stay in third person; for example, write about "the faculty" instead of "we" and "readers" rather than "you."

◇ **Agreement.** Once writers have determined the appropriate verb tense and person, they must be sure to make subjects and verbs, and antecedents and pronouns, agree. This is not particularly difficult, except for two primary instances: when a phrase comes between the subject and verb and when the antecedent is technically a singular pronoun but popular usage indicates a plural reference.

For example, these sentences violate rules for agreement:

> "The Office of Student Services *are* responsible for a variety of services associated with student life."

> "The living environment in Fulton Hall, one of five student residences, *are* enhanced with state of the art technology in each room."

> "Each student has *their* own laptop computer."

> "Anyone who wishes to attend Imaginary University can apply for one of many endowed scholarships. *They* will be given full consideration if . . ."

◇ **Modifiers.** Some very entertaining sentences appear in self-studies if writers are not careful to place modifiers right next to the word(s) they modify.

This rule holds for "only"; thus sentences such as these are incorrect:

"The International Student Services office is *only* administered by the Vice President of Enrollment Management."

"Because they *only* meet once a year, this office feels removed from other academic programs on campus."

Other errors of modification may occur with phrases gone awry. For example,

"In 1997, the Anderson apartment building was converted into a men's residence hall, *previously rented to female faculty and students.*"

◇ **Punctuation.** In proofreading for errors in punctuation, be especially diligent regarding consistency in the use of serial commas, capitalization of references to the institution being described, and the use of underlining and quotation marks for various titles. Thus, either do or don't include commas before the last item in a series; either usage is correct, although the meaning is often clearer if the comma is included, but be consistent. When the institution is referred to by name, or when *college* or *university* is used in place of the full proper name, use capital letters. Again, be consistent from section to section throughout the document. Standard usage dictates that titles of works such as books, newspapers, periodicals, plays, films, television programs, works of visual art, and software, for example, must be underlined. (Note that underlining represents italics). Titles of shorter entities such as poem, song, or chapter titles are placed in quotation marks.

◇ **Abbreviations.** Write out most words and titles. Titles and professional degrees can be abbreviated if they appear before or after the proper name, but never if they are disconnected from the name. Names of campus organizations, buildings, and publications must be written in full, at least the first time they appear in a specific section of the document. Generally, do not use abbreviations for days of the week, months, or courses of study, and write in words all numbers of one or two words; use figures for numbers that require more than two words. The key here, again, is consistency. If you decide to use a different style, for example for the presentation of numbers, be sure that you follow it throughout all sections of the Self-Study Report.

Presentation

It is necessary to provide a table of contents for your readers; make it as clear and readable as possible. Avoid tables of contents that cover several pages and are cumbersomely numbered; including section headings (with page numbers) at the tops of pages is very useful. Similarly, a list of appendices, materials found in the Resource Room, and other supplemental material is helpful to your team. Be sure margins are consistent, and that the same format is used for all headings throughout the document (remember parallelism).

Specific Cautions

Having written and read several self-studies, I will conclude with a list of pairs of words that are sometimes problematic. As you write, revise, and proof your document, note these pitfalls. As is so often the case, thinking about them beforehand, and discussing matters of tone, style, grammar, mechanics, and punctuation with others who are writing with you will save you a lot of time and trouble and will ensure that your Self-Study Report will be clear, concise, readable, and thus will present your institution very effectively and efficiently.

◇ **Problematic pairs**

It's/Its – *It's* is a contraction and *its* is possessive.

"**It's** important that the faculty sets **its** agenda for monthly meetings."

Effect/Affect – *Effect* is a noun and *affect* is a verb.

"The **effect** of that decision was serious; it **affected** all University students."

Between/Among – Use *between* for two entities and *among* for more than two.

"There was extensive discussion **between** the President and the Vice-president about ways to ensure fair distribution of funds **among** all divisions at the University."

Number/Amount - Use *number* for countable quantities and *among* for those that can not be counted.

> "As the **number** of students has increased, so has the **amount** of financial aid given by the University each year."

Fewer/Less - Use *fewer* for countable quantities and *less* for those that can not be counted.

> "As **fewer** students chose to live in residence halls last year, there was **less** revenue to use for programming student activities."

Criteria/Criterion - *Criteria* is the plural form of *criterion.*

> "Search committees look at several **criteria** in deciding whom to hire, but the most important **criterion** at this University is evidence of good teaching."

Data/Datum - *Data* is the plural form of *datum.*

> "**Data** are essential. With this last **datum,** this paper has come full circle."

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Chapter 13

NCA

Preparing for a Focused Visit

CONNECTING
THE DISCONNECTS

104th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
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A Case Study of Organizational Strain: The Multiple Roles of a Faculty Led Self-Study for a Focused Visit*

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Background

The formal North Central self-study process at Southeastern began in the Summer of 1996 with the formation of the Self-Study Steering Committee as an endeavor to satisfy the concerns of the 1993 comprehensive evaluation Team Report. However, the processes of institutional/cultural change began as early as October of 1994. The essence of this process was reflected in the preface of the 1998 Self-Study Report:

> *The 1993 NCA Comprehensive Visit to Southeastern presented a challenge to the culture of the University. The NCA Team presented the University with an opportunity to begin changing from a culture that has traditionally been very stability oriented to a culture that is more dynamic and willing to embrace change. As this process has unfolded, two issues have become very clear. First, the process of making this cultural change has clearly begun at Southeastern. Second, the transformation of the organizational culture will be ongoing and will continue far beyond the current focused visit....*

As a result of the 1993 site visit, Southeastern was granted continued accreditation with the next comprehensive evaluation in ten years and with the stipulation that a focused visit be conducted during the 1998-99 academic year. The Team's recommendation for the focused visit was stated as follows:

> *A visit be scheduled in the 1998-99 academic year focused on the demonstration of the full implementation of a governing process operating with clearly defined structures, formulated through policies and procedures that provide for faculty and administration to exercise oversight for all educational offerings. The governance process should integrate the activities in program review, assessment, institutional planning with the responsibilities of the faculty for development of curricula, approval of all curricular offerings of the institution, and the evaluation of the effectiveness and currency of the curriculum.*

The 1993 NCA Team had identified an artifact of the old culture that was simply to develop responses to NCA initiatives without careful and thoughtful integration within the larger university system, and/or the faculty subsystem. While the institution had made substantial efforts in the development of program review and assessment, as well as a more limited effort in planning, no effort had been made to connect these functions with each other or with the governance system. The "opportunity" provided by the focused visit created a strong challenge for the university to examine itself and make crucial changes. These changes would lead to new roles, new relationships, and new structure within the organization. This process of change at times caused the organization to experience significant strain as the old culture began to unfreeze and a state of disequilibrium was experienced.

In several ways this self-study was a precedent-setting event within the culture of Southeastern. First, the 1993 NCA team forced the University to think in terms of an integrative approach to implementing some of the key functions of the institution. No longer where we able simply to develop isolated responses to NCA initiatives. Second, Southeastern has a history of being a very "top down" organization in which self-studies were more administratively directed. In addition, meaningful organizational change was almost never instigated from the faculty in the past. The faculty were perpetually in the role of reactively responding to administrative decisions. The 1993 NCA team wisely recognized that in order for the institution to mature, faculty must take their rightful place in the process. The self-study process itself began this transition toward a much more "shared" governance process with the selection of a Self-Study Steering Committee comprised entirely of faculty members. Administrators acted as consultants to the team, which was a significant change in the process.

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* This paper addresses preparation for a Commission-mandated focused visit.

As might be expected, this transition did not occur without some "growing pains," or as we have referred to it earlier, as organizational strain for both the faculty involved and the institution. New faculty roles, relationships, and functions had to be defined, developed, and implemented within the Steering Committee, as well as the larger University community. Some of these new roles included faculty as analysts, evaluators, catalysts, change agents, and historians. In addition, the reality of new relationships also emerged, including the Steering Committee's relationship with the Faculty Senate, administration, the larger governance structure, and with peers.

Role of the Steering Committee as Analyst of the Organizational System

Previous steering committees had acted primarily as historians or reporters. However, this self-study required that the steering committee also analyze the 1993 team report as well as the state of the institution. This required faculty to take a critical look at where the institution was and how we could begin to make improvements. Obviously the self-study process forced the members of the self-study team to make the transition from a historically passive role to a much more active evaluative role. Some things that emerged from this transition included greater faculty empowerment and ownership of the process and ultimately the institution. As this part of the process progressed, the discussions in the Steering Committee changed from accusing the 1993 NCA team of "totally missing the boat" to an emerging recognition that the team was on target. We had built an organizational system of fragmented functions, such as program review, strategic planning, and assessment, that largely operated in a disconnected manner from each other. Related to this, many faculty viewed these functions as being "forced" on them by some perceived external organization such as NCA or other external sources.

Role of the Steering Committee as Catalyst and Integrator

Once we had clearly accepted the fragmentation that existed the steering committee began to function as the catalyst for change, which, as already was mentioned, was a unique role for faculty to take in the culture. The Self-Study Steering Committee began the change process by identifying and categorizing all of the 1993 NCA team's concerns relevant to either governance or assessment. Each of these concerns was then operationally defined as an institutional objective and was developed as follows:

- **Shared governance**

  The University will

  - increase faculty participation in the University governance;
  - develop clearly defined procedures and processes to share oversight of all educational programs between faculty and administration;
  - increase the role of the faculty in program review, assessment, and planning;
  - develop a systematic planning and review process to address programs, resources, and University-wide budget issues;
  - enhance the role of the faculty in development of the Academic Plan;
  - increase evidence of open faculty forums to discuss major issues and make recommendations to the president;
  - decrease the use of ad-hoc committees.

◇ **Assessment and program review**

The University will

- increase linkage of assessment with program review;
- specify and document the ways in which degree programs use assessment information to change curricula and enhance program quality;
- begin development of systematic evaluation of graduates by employers in an effort to enhance degree programs;
- review outcome statements for all academic programs and modify for appropriateness, usefulness, and measurability;
- increase utilization of assessment feedback to improve the quality of instruction for students;
- continuously evaluate all measures used by degree programs to assess student performance and program quality.

The use of these institutional objectives in the self-study process would clearly give direction and set the integration process in motion. These also gave clear standards of evaluation that could be used later in the self-study process.

Role of the Steering Committee as Change Agent within the Faculty and Organizational Culture

As is the case with all evolutionary processes, change occurred at an uneven rate. For example, prior to 1995, progress and change were painfully slow as the institution began to grapple with some of the basic changes that needed to occur. Solutions had to be proposed and discussed, and consensus had to be reached. After consensus was reached, basic modification of the foundation of governance had to begin: such as putting the Faculty Senate in an oversight role. However, as the institution began to make some of the foundational adjustments, change began to occur at a faster pace. Not only was the rate of change uneven since the last 1993 comprehensive visit, but also at times there was a somewhat chaotic quality to the process itself. For example, when one election was required to give the Faculty Senate an oversight function, another election was then required to define what exactly oversight meant. It is certain that at times faculty and administrators alike sometimes wondered where they were going, and whether or not they were going to like it when they got there. However, even with the unevenness of progress and the occasional chaotic aspects of the process (which we believe is very much a part of any evolutionary process), a new pattern began to emerge within the institution that prior to the 1993 comprehensive visit had not been a part of the organizational culture. The most significant part of this whole process was that faculty members were initiating and enacting change.

One of the first areas that had to be addressed in the change process was the role of the Faculty Senate. Since the 1993 NCA comprehensive visit, the Faculty Senate has become the principal faculty organization involved in shared governance. Prior to the 1993 comprehensive visit this was not the case. The Senate at that time was a poorly defined, free-standing entity. It had no real connection with any of the primary functions of the faculty, such as curriculum development, assessment, or program review. Its composition was primarily younger, nontenured faculty members who held the rank of instructor or assistant professor. The Faculty Senate was virtually ignored by both senior faculty and administrators. By a vote of the general faculty on February 2, 1996, and further defined by a subsequent vote in September 1996, the Senate received the responsibility for overseeing the University Standing Committee System, which previously had no formal relationship to the Senate. This change enhanced and solidified the role of the Faculty Senate in the governance process. Each of the standing committees of the University was then placed under the oversight of one of the Faculty Senate committees. The definition of the Faculty Senate's oversight function was evolved to now include: (1) an annual charge to each standing committee; (2) a formal reporting process; (3) the responsibility for staffing each committee; (4) the authority to re-write the function statement of each standing committee; (5) the formal authority to review and make modifications in areas that directly affect the primary work of the faculty such as curriculum matters; and (6) the authority to form new committees as well as the authority to dissolve current committees.[3] This oversight function has led to the creation of three new committees: the Committee on Committees, the General Education Committee, and the Technology Committee. It also led to the modification of the function of the Institutional Research and Assessment Committee (IRAC) and the dissolution of the Faculty Appointing Committee and Academic Policies Committee. The process for building the new culture was now in place.

In addition, two other significant events that have had a very real influence on changing governance and the institution as a whole emerged. First, after several lengthy discussions that were ongoing during the 1997-98 academic year, the Statement on Shared Governance was formulated to further clarify the roles and relationship between the administration and the faculty. Next, the Faculty Senate developed an annual governance process that involves faculty in the oversight of assessment, program review, and the curriculum planning processes. This process begins early in the fall with the assignment of specific charges to the IRAC (key function: assessment and program review), the General Education Committee (key function: assessment and review and planning of the general education curriculum), the Faculty Senate Planning Committee (key function: assessment and review of curriculum planning), and the Faculty Senate Budget Committee (key function: assessment and review of faculty involvement in the budget process). These committees function as feedback loops for each of their respective key functions. This process culminated in reports offered by these committees during the Annual Forum on Shared Governance. This forum serves as a point of integration for the work of the faculty and also provides for a critical link with the administration. The reports present the review and recommendations of the key committees and become the basis of the Faculty Senate charges for the following year.

What became increasingly more clear in the process was that the steering committee and the Faculty Senate were building critical connections/relationships between the faculty and the administration in an effort to enhance the participation in decision making. These connections are reflected in Figure 1. These connections included: (1) strengthening and formalizing the relationship between the president and the Faculty Senate; (2) the annual governance process and the forum on shared governance; (3) the oversight function of the Faculty Senate; and (4) the policy on shared governance.

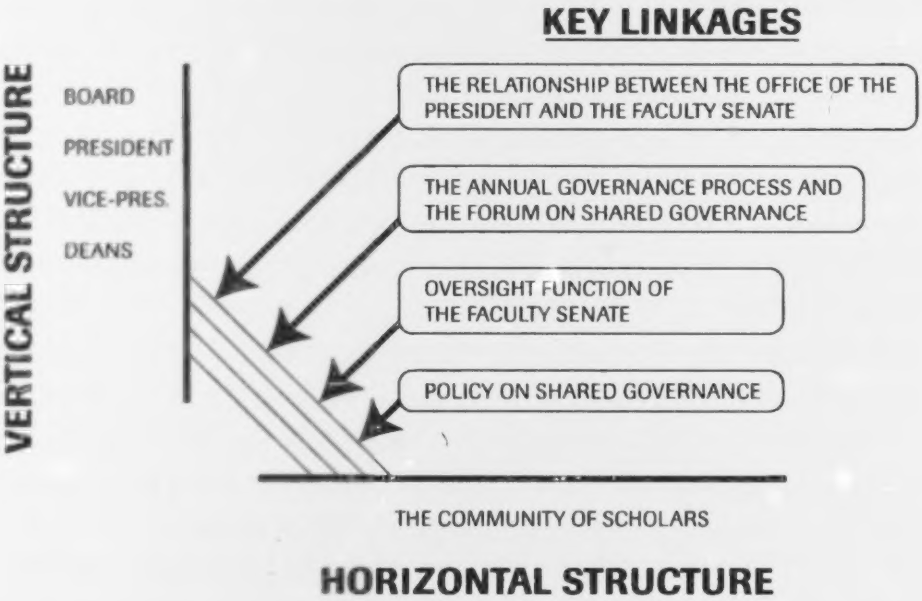
KEY LINKAGES
VERTICAL STRUCTURE
BOARD
PRESIDENT
VICE-PRES.
DEANS
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE FACULTY SENATE
THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE PROCESS AND THE FORUM ON SHARED GOVERNANCE
OVERSIGHT FUNCTION OF THE FACULTY SENATE
POLICY ON SHARED GOVERNANCE
THE COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS
HORIZONTAL STRUCTURE

FIGURE 1: ENHANCING SHARED GOVERNANCE THROUGH THE LINKAGE OF VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL STRUCTURES

Role of the Steering Committee as Historian of the Evolutionary Process

The final role of the Steering Committee was to function as the historian of the process that evolved and developed. This was a more traditional role and one that fit more with past experience and the expectations of faculty and administration. However, there were some examples of organizational strain that developed here as well. For example, the standing committees had to make a difficult transition from the old system to the new system. The challenge to change from a passive participant in the governance process to a much more active participant at times met with some resistance as some committees were slow to engage in their new functions. This resistance was to be expected, and even predicted, given the difficult task of convincing humans to risk change, and ultimately, revitalize the culture.

The Reality of Dual Relationships for a Faculty Led Self-Study

With the changing roles of the steering committee members, the potential for dual relationships significantly increased. The difficulties associated with dual relationships are well documented in the psychotherapy and organizational behavior literature. The basic dilemma with any dual relationship is the violation of expectancies with regard to the nature and the parameters of the relationship. For example, relationships that have been established on one level often experience conflict when another type of relationship, such as a peer as an authority figure, is introduced into the equation. While the Steering Committee did not operate as a formal part of the "chain of command," it did function much like a member of the administration in some respects. More specifically, the Steering Committee often assigned tasks, evaluated assignments, and reported to superiors on the performance of a faculty member or committee. Thus the proverbial dual relationship was created: a Steering Committee composed of faculty acting as pseudo-administrators. This of course led to additional organizational strain as well. Some examples include resistance to assigned tasks, poor completion of assignments, attributions of the intentions of the Steering Committee members (i.e., selected members of the Steering Committee had "hidden agendas"). In fairness, this type of strain was experienced on a limited basis; but it was an identifiable part of the process again attributable to humans coping with a disequilibrium or unfreezing process.

Primary Organizational Interventions

Throughout this paper, a number of interventions have been discussed to that led to the changes addressed in the 1993 NCA Team Report. These interventions, which required faculty to function differently then they ever had before, were developed through collaboration between the Steering Committee and the Faculty Senate. A summary of these interventions is given below for clarity.

- The Faculty Senate began to restructure the standing committee structure to replace administrators with faculty members as chairs.
- The Steering Committee was composed entirely of faculty and administrators acted as only consultants in the process.
- The Faculty Senate began to redesign the standing committee system to enhance faculty ownership of key functions such as assessment, program review, and general education.
- The Faculty Senate formalized its relationship with the office of the President and its place on the formal organizational chart.
- The Faculty Senate, Administration, and Steering Committee successfully negotiated a policy statement on shared governance that clearly delineated the roles and responsibilities of the administration and the faculty.
- The Faculty Senate and the Steering Committee developed an annual governance process that included assigned responsibilities and culminated in an annual forum on shared governance.
- The Faculty Senate and the Administration negotiated and established a formal budget process that links program review and assessment to the budget request process.
- The Faculty Senate's oversight function was defined and expanded.

Critique of the Process

It is rather easy to see that a great deal of activity has occurred since the last NCA visit in 1993. The inevitable question is: given the organizational strain experienced, how effective have the changes been in addressing the concerns of the 1993 NCA team? We first attempted to answer this question by utilizing a goal attainment format based on the findings of the self-study. Our second method of critiquing our overall effectiveness was to review faculty survey data that will be discussed later in more detail.

Goal Attainment of Institutional Objectives

We have categorized the degree of goal attainment of each of the institutional objectives outlined earlier in three general categories: High Attainment (objective was met completely), Moderate Attainment (objective was partially met), and Low Attainment (objective was not met consistently). Goals were placed in each category based on a detailed qualitative evaluation presented in the original Self-Study Report. The following institutional goals are delineated with their level of attainment.

◇ **High level of attainment**

The University will

- increase faculty participation in the University governance;
- develop clearly defined procedures and processes to share oversight of all educational programs between faculty and administration;
- increase the role of the faculty in program review, assessment, and planning;
- increase linkage of assessment with program review;
- review outcome statements for all academic programs and modify for appropriateness, usefulness, and measurability.

◇ **Moderate level of attainment**

The University will

- develop a systematic planning and review process to address programs, resources, and University-wide budget issues;
- increase evidence of open faculty forums to discuss major issues and make recommendation to the president;
- specify and document the ways in which degree programs use assessment information to change curricula and enhance program quality.

◇ **Low level of attainment**

The University will

- enhance the role of the faculty in development of the Academic Plan;
- decrease the use of ad-hoc committees;
- begin development of systematic evaluation of graduates by employers in an effort to enhance degree programs.

Comparative Ratings From The 1997 and 1998 NCA Faculty Surveys

The Steering Committee administered a faculty survey during the Fall 1997 semester, and re-administered the same survey during the Fall 1998 semester to determine if any changes had occurred over the year in the faculty's perception regarding their involvement in decision making, planning, budgeting, and assessment. It was thought that since many of the significant events had occurred during the 1997-98 academic year, a unique opportunity existed to conduct a sort of institutional case study with a pretest/posttest evaluation of how well the institution was making progress in these significant areas. A comparison between the percent positive ratings on the 1997 survey and the 1998 survey is presented in Table 1. The percent positive rating was the percentage of the respondents who believed that the University was making progress on the particular item. The only statistically significant result was found on the budget involvement item. On this item the percent positive increased fifty percentage points from the 1997 to 1998 survey. This finding strongly supported the notion that the increased faculty involvement in the 1997-98 budget initiative was seen by faculty as a positive step.

Table 1

Comparative Ratings from the 1997 and 1998 NCA Survey of Faculty in Selected Issues

Item	Percent Positive 1997 Survey Results	Percent Positive 1998 Survey Results
Faculty participation in the decision making process at this institution.	66	72
Faculty participation in the decision making process in my school.	71	76
Faculty participation in the decision making process my department.	86	92
Faculty are involved in planning efforts which are specifically designed to enhance curriculum and academic programs within the institution.	61	58
Faculty are involved in planning efforts which are specifically designed to enhance curriculum and academic programs within my school.	66	66
Faculty are involved in planning efforts which are specifically designed to enhance curriculum and academic programs within my department	86	90
Faculty are involved in the budgeting process particularly when funds are needed to enhance the curriculum.	20	70*
The assessment process is used in my department to improve the quality of Academic Programs.	65	61
Faculty are involved in the assessment process in my department.	81	69
I feel that faculty participation in the governance process has increased since 1993 at this institution.	65	95

$\chi^2=10.054$, df=2, $< p= .007$, response rate=51%

Generally speaking, an increase was noted on most of the other items, including faculty involvement in decision making (department, school, institution); planning (department only); and faculty participation in the governance process. It should be noted that none of these increases was statistically significant because it was nearly impossible to achieve statistical significance on most of these items given the high percentages reported on the 1997 survey. For this reason, a demonstrated positive trend over several years will likely be more telling than actual statistical significance.

Three areas demonstrated a decrease from 1997 to 1998–involvement in planning (institutional level), the use of assessment to improve the quality at the department level, and faculty involvement in the assessment process at the departmental level. The item concerning planning was initially a curious result since so much effort had been spent on strategic planning during the 1997-98 academic year. However, review of the survey item revealed that this item was not focused on strategic planning, but rather on curriculum planning. The decrease noted on the assessment items continues to highlight a problem with assessment that exists at the departmental level. Faculty are feeling less involved in the assessment process in their departments, and there also appears to be a need to continue to improve the way assessment data are used to improve academic programs at the departmental level.

Overall, how has the institution done from Fall 1997 to Fall 1998 from the faculty's perspective? The comparative survey results suggest that improvements have been made in faculty participation in decision making, departmental curriculum planning, budgeting, and faculty participation in the governance process. Renewed efforts need to be made by the institution, particularly with respect to faculty participation and utilization of the assessment process to enhance student learning at the departmental level.

Summary and Conclusions

Southeastern Oklahoma State University has clearly demonstrated a commitment to change since the 1993 NCA comprehensive visit. The achievements and modifications in the governance process have been substantial and real. A governance process now clearly exists that operates within defined structures and is formulated through policies and procedures. A balance between administrative and faculty oversight of all education offerings is emerging. The governance process is now clearly linked with the key functions of the faculty such as program review, assessment, and planning in a way which previously did not exist at this institution. The 1998 NCA focused visit team has validated these conclusions and has recommended no additional focused visits until the next comprehensive visit. We are expecting in the near future a favorable final action from the Commission. One of the most important outcomes of the whole process has been the empowerment of the faculty both through the change in roles and the change in relationships. Eventually we hope to see the effects of this empowerment in the classroom as well.

Our experience has confirmed a quote cited in the beginning of the Focused Visit Report:

> *Change rarely occurs easily...If it is often difficult to change our own behavior in a specific area of life, imagine how difficult it may be to alter the culture, the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, expectancies of an entire organization. This daunting task has caused many...to throw their hands up in despair, as history and established practices work to defeat their efforts to produce desirable change..."* (Greenberg and Baron, 1993)

Any unfreezing process creates significant strain in an institution. This was experienced to varying degrees in the self-study process. When the cultural history of the organization does not include any precedent for a faculty led process, this strain intensifies. In addition, the strain is exacerbated by the emerging problem of dual relationships within a faculty led effort. This strain is to be expected and even planned for in any faculty led unfreezing process. However, the benefits of the process far outweigh the cost of overcoming the strain and resistance to change.

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Four Lessons Learned from the Focused Visit Process*

Michael J. Kane

Moody Bible Institute (MBI) was established in 1886 and has been a member of NCA since 1989. In May 1998, a focused visit evaluation team consisting of two Consultant-Evaluators visited its Chicago campus to evaluate two proposed institutional change requests. The first request was related to its Graduate Division requesting approval to add two new degrees, the Master of Divinity and the Master of Urban Studies, and also requesting the removal of the stipulation in the Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) which read, "The Institute limits its graduate programs and sites to current offerings." The second request related to its External Studies Division requesting the removal from the SAS under "New Sites" of the stipulation which read, "Prior commission approval required."

The process of preparing the focused visit report and hosting a visiting team proved to be a very helpful, positive, and instructive experience for MBI. Moody learned at least four lessons as a result of the focused visit process.

☐ **Lesson I: It is wise to consult with a staff liaison *early* in the process and throughout the process as appropriate.**

Lesson I was learned the hard way. In 1995, the Institute hosted a visiting team for a comprehensive evaluation of the college's NCA affiliation as required after the initial five year membership in NCA. The Institute had done its self-study well and was pleased with the final report of the team. It was assumed that the evaluation team would review and as appropriate recommend updates to the SAS. After the report was released it was discovered that the SAS Graduate Division stipulation had not been removed. By then, it was too late to have the team formally evaluate this stipulation. At the time this occurred the Institute did not have plans to add more graduate degrees, but within a couple of years things changed. That's when Lesson I became an integral part of MBI's mental schemata. Ouch! Lesson learned: assumptions should be tested and confirmed by the staff liaison.

The first lesson was further confirmed with the positive experiences of interaction with the staff liaison as Moody prepared for the focused visit. This experience began by reviewing the "Institutional Change" *(Handbook*, 161-164) section with the liaison, early in the process. The change section appears to be straightforward and undoubtedly for most instances this is true. However, as hinted by the comment at the top of page 162, ". . . but are not limited to. . .," it is not always easy to determine if proposed changes need Commission approval and if so, which approval process is required.

For example, the process of determining what became Moody's second request to delete the stipulation under New Degree Sites, "Prior commission approval required," was not initially clear. For Moody there were two possible printed changes that could apply. They were "Adding a new degree level" or the change, "Delivering for the first time a degree program offered primarily through distance delivery methods" (162). MBI was not adding a new degree level. This was not the first time offering of distance learning as a number of sites had been previously approved by the visiting teams in 1995 and 1989. Moody wanted the opportunity to add more extension sites without needing Commission approval as they were added. In the discussions it became apparent that the need for the focused visit was due to the level of freedom that was being asked, not something clearly stipulated in the change section. The fact that there was a stipulation on the SAS also mandated a visit. It should also be noted that the institute initiated the proposal at the recommendation of the staff liaison. She realized that a graduate visit was necessary and that a future second visit could be avoided by combining the two visits into this one (Lesson I relearned).

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* This paper addresses preparation for a focused visit for institutional change.

☐ **Lesson II: There is a significant difference between a comprehensive self-study process and a focused visit process.**

The differences are apparent in the reports prepared for the NCA and the actual visits. The production of the Self-Study Report involves a wide spectrum of campus stakeholders. If the report is to be used as an evaluation device and an instrument to stimulate campus change, it is logical as well as recommended to utilize representatives of the whole campus community. The final form of the report has a prescribed outline with some given structure, but it has room for a significant amount of personalization as appropriate to each institution.

The focused visit report for an "Institutional Change" is by contrast a very prescribed report. A specific location in the *Handbook* (165-168) stipulates the overall outline as well as the relatively precise information it requires. This means that most of the *Handbook* is not directly used in the making of the report. The rest of the *Handbook* is useful as there are many examples of how to demonstrate appropriate "patterns of evidence" when providing the required information. There is also an unstated assumption inherent in preparing the report that the institution will particularly address concerns not specifically prescribed but relevant to the type of change being made. For example, Moody included in its report and in its appendices relevant patterns of evidence for meeting the requirements of graduate education and distance learning *(Handbook*, 47, 119, 170-173, 37-38). Pages 37-38 of the *Handbook* describe the resources of the library. While one would not necessarily look at these pages in doing a focused report, they proved very useful in Moody's preparation. So an editor should become aware of the overall contents of the *Handbook* to utilize it effectively.

Depending on the type of change requiring a focused report, the breadth of community involvement is not as wide as the Self-Study Report. Often, the focused report addresses only a portion of the campus community, which of course needs to be well represented. The nature of the report tends to be very technical, often requiring specific expertise versus general opinion or feedback. What this means for the editor is a greater responsibility not only for the content of the report, but also for the necessary amount of involvement by the affected community. It is a difficult balancing act. At Moody it was found that a typical self-study committee was not practical. Instead there was one editor (the author) who worked with the different administrators and faculty of the two academic divisions. The requests for change originated from the two faculties and administrations, so their involvement and contribution to the report was easily obtained. Also, the final report was reviewed by those affected prior to its submission.

The actual visits of the comprehensive team and the focused team are different. There are fewer people (two for Moody) who visit for a shorter amount of time (ca. two days for Moody) and produce a smaller report for the focused visit (Moody produced separate reports for each proposal of 19 and 17 pages). In some respects this makes a focused visit easier to host. On the down side it means that a school must be better prepared to answer the team's questions and there is greater difficulty ensuring the availability of all necessary individuals for the interviews. The *Handbook* (143) prescribes the materials to be available in the resource room for the comprehensive team visit. For the focused visit one can with common sense use the list as a guide in supplying the materials for the resource room. If a checklist could be provided for the team chair early in the discussion concerning team arrangements, it might be possible to get a more targeted resource list.

☐ **Lesson III: A satisfactory and successful process requires thorough preparation.**

Since much of a team's decision is based on the information provided by the college through a report and through interviews on campus, it stands to reason that much of the outcome for the review is in the hands of those who prepare the report and prepare for the visit. It is the responsibility of the institution to provide accurate and all necessary information to the team. The team must then verify the accuracy and integrity of the data provided using their professional judgment. It is important to remember that the information that is provided along with the team report is also evaluated by a review process and ultimately by the Commission. The review consultants and the Commission do not have the benefit of verbal explanation or interpretation of the report. For a successful visit it is therefore critical to produce complete, accurate, and unambiguous data that provide a pattern of evidence demonstrating a logical rationale for granting all or a modified version of a proposal for institutional change.

The importance of thorough preparation is a commonly accepted principle; but like common sense, it is not too common to find thorough preparation. From personal experience in reading many reports and from experience on focused visit teams the author has found that many times either a request for information is not provided at all or what is given does not clearly demonstrate the necessary pattern of evidence (e.g., *see Handbook*, 29). Those who prepare the reports must ask themselves, "Did we answer the question? Did we provide the data requested?" The response that is given cannot just be what the editor would like to pontificate about on the subject. It is also essential that the editor remember that it is not up to the visiting team to demonstrate and document that the institution meets the requirements; it is up to the institution. The institution provides the first and foundational level of documentation. The team provides the second level of documentation, that of verification of the data and validation of that data using professional judgment based on their knowledge and experience. Third and fourth levels of evaluation are performed by Readers or Review Committees and the Commission.

Another practical suggestion to utilize when providing the data and pattern of evidence is to employ a deductive style of writing whenever possible. Readers should be told what they will discover before they review the data. This practice makes the report very functional for the evaluators.

An example of thorough preparation at Moody, which was not in the report but had been prepared just in case a question was asked, was a comparison of the proposed Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree with the requirements outlined in the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) *Handbook*. ATS is the professional accrediting association for graduate theological education. At this point in time Moody is not a member of the Association and is not subject to its prescriptions, which are more stringent than the NCA guidelines. However, knowing that most graduate schools and seminaries are ATS members, it was reasonable to assume that an evaluator would have ATS experience and would want to know how Moody's curriculum would compare to ATS's guidelines. ATS has four prescribed subject areas that an MDiv curriculum must include. It does not prescribe the weight or percentage that a school must assign. So as part of the overall preparation process the author prepared a four item curriculum chart. The chart compared percentages in each of the four categories with other ATS schools that have a similar religious heritage as Moody. During the visit the team actually asked for information that was readily provided with this chart, information that confirmed to the team the validity of the curriculum being proposed. Since this comparison had been done several months prior to the visit and since it was not part of the NCA requirement, the author had forgotten about the data and had not even placed it in the resource room. Needless to say, it was for the author a significant lesson proving the blessing of thorough preparation.

☐ **Lesson IV: If an institution has done its preparation homework, there is no need to fear the process. Have a little faith in the tried and proven peer review process.**

Like most institutions, Moody did not look forward to having outside evaluators visit the campus. There was an unspoken fear that the evaluators would become out-of-control "storm-troopers" who would discover previously unknown problems. Or perhaps even worse, the storm-troopers would redefine the data and reinterpret the best efforts of the Institute to be nothing but a sham. So it was a considerable relief to discover these secret fears to be completely false. The evaluators were true peers who acted on MBI's behalf, while objectively fulfilling their responsibility to the public. Their input was reasonable and helpful. Acting as wise mentors they once again proved that we should have faith in the peer review system. Moody's two proposals were modified, benefiting all parties, and eventually approved by the Commission.

The focused visit process, including the report and visit, produced at least four lessons for Moody Bible Institute:

I. It is wise to consult with a staff liaison early in the process and throughout the process as appropriate.

II. There is a significant difference between a comprehensive self-study process and a focused visit process.

III. A satisfactory and successful process requires thorough preparation.

IV. If an institution has done it's preparation homework, there is no need to fear the process. Have a little faith in the tried and proven peer review process.

It is hoped that the lessons learned through this process by MBI will be of benefit to institutions who are or will be going through a focused visit.

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Focused Visits and the Right Connections*

Marie A. Giacomelli

The North Central Association defines the purposes and kinds of focus visits as follows:

- ○ to monitor specific developments and changes at the institution—a visit that occurs in review of proposed change the institution; or
- ○ to follow up on concerns identified by a previous evaluation process—a visit mandated by prior Commission action.

For an institution anticipating a focus visit, the kind of visit presents some unique needs related to its specific purpose. However, some common preparation strategies apply to both kinds of visits.

Background Information

In 1990, Robert Morris College completed its formal self-study for a comprehensive visit and was granted continued accreditation in 1991 with the next comprehensive evaluation in ten years. Like any other institution that involves a large proportion of faculty and staff in the self-study process and in preparing for the site visit, a loud collective sigh of relief resounded throughout the institution when the notice of Commission action was received. Equally satisfying was the fact that there were to be no interim progress, monitoring, or contingency reports, nor any other required visits.

Focused visits became a reality though in 1992, 1996, and 1998 because of planned institutional changes; and a required focused visit occurred in 1994 as a result of the first institutional change. Three approaches common to all the focused visits proved useful in achieving desirable accreditation and institutional development results. Each approach—a proactive perspective, continuous communication, and detailed visit preparations—relies on planning as its foundation. The tasks to be accomplished—analyzing issues, writing the document, and presenting the supporting evidence—are secondary to the planning and institutional improvement mindset that must prevail.

Approach #1: A Proactive Perspective

Even though both kinds of focused visits are relatively narrow in scope compared to a comprehensive visit, an institution is well advised to undertake the focused evaluation process with a broad view of itself. While the report for a mandated focused visit or the request for institutional change do not require a complete institutional self-study process, addressing the areas of concern in the former or describing the proposed change in the latter do require institutional context if a favorable outcome is to be achieved.

The first step is devising an action plan for the areas of concern or for the proposed institutional change, depending on the purpose of the focused visit. The action plan establishes the internal structure through which the necessary planning and self-evaluation evolves. For instance, when Robert Morris College pursued addition of a new degree level, a Feasibility Task Force was established with broad faculty and staff representation that considered all functional areas of the College. The task force was responsible for proposing the objectives, resource additions plan, and anticipated outcomes of the initiative that fashioned the request for institutional change. Later, in preparing for the required focused visit that resulted from the Commission's approval of that institutional change, the College immediately established four Working Subcommittees, each of which was assigned to study and make recommendations regarding one of the areas of concern.

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* This paper addresses preparation for either type of focused visit.

The effectiveness of the first step is dependent on some key variables: time, commitment, and clarity. Implementing the internal planning/evaluation structure early enough and selecting individuals in the institution who possess the necessary insights and interests has a direct bearing on the quality of issue analyses, information gathering, and report writing. Making assignments that become increasingly more explicit as the process unfolds assures appropriate breadth and depth.

Next in the sequence of proactive strategies is a careful examination of the team report(s) from previous evaluation visit(s). Besides reviewing the summary list of strengths and concerns, give thought to the related subtleties expressed in the report narrative and in the advice/suggestions offered. These furnish a useful springboard for the planning process. Consider how the institution's issue analyses and supporting documentation will reflect these in the report for the focused visit or in the request for institutional change. In addition, watch for opportunities where clearer articulation of the institution's priorities is needed.

An equally important proactive strategy that begins at the outset and continues throughout the process of preparing for either type of focused visit is cultivation of internal awareness. Recognize and remind yourself often that the written report merely introduces the reader/site visitor to the institution and the focus topics. The faculty and staff members with whom the team interacts while on campus expand the team's first impression to a meaningful understanding of institutional dynamics.

For the required visit focused on areas of concern, the written report prepared by the institution and the awareness cultivated among the faculty and staff should clearly identify the concerns, the actions taken, internal feelings about the issue and the progress made so far, opportunities/goals for continued improvement and how these will be accomplished. For a focused visit related to institutional change, NCA requires a written, in-depth analysis of ten specified dimensions related to the requested change; internal awareness should be developed among faculty and staff on the same basis.

Approach #2: Continuous Communication

The communication aspect of preparing for a focused visit cannot be overstated. Timing and continuity are critical. Starting early and maintaining a dialog with NCA and with faculty and staff throughout the planning/preparation phases and even beyond the visit are the best guidelines.

In addition to the previous description of faculty and staff awareness, periodic campus-wide meetings with an in-service/staff development objective can be devoted to broadening and unifying individual understanding of the purpose and scope of the entire process and the visit itself. Understanding the institution's past and present and its plans for the future is likewise essential. Such empowerment of faculty and staff will enable them to respond cogently during the visit.

The report for the focused visit or the request for institutional change should be widely distributed to faculty and staff and specific "talking points" from it reviewed and discussed during one of the campus-wide meetings. In addition, the person designated by the institution to direct the focused visit process may wish to pose for discussion some questions anticipated from the team members during the site visit.

Whether communication with NCA precedes or follows the start-up of campus-wide communication about a focused visit is best determined by the institution, based on its style of interacting with internal and external constituents and taking into consideration any special needs related to the focus process. Nonetheless, the communication should at least include a thorough discussion between the institution's designated representative and the NCA staff liaison regarding the focus areas, team members' expertise or characteristics and institution type, and timing of the visit. Once the team members have been identified and the institution's materials sent to them, the institution's designated representative should contact the team chair to discuss any team preferences and needs. The preliminary agenda for the visit can be constructed and refined through ongoing discussions so that the team's time on campus is as productive as possible.

Not to be overlooked as part of the communication initiative are the obvious NCA information sources: participation in the NCA Annual Meeting and the Self-Study Workshop–Fair–Resource Room; perusal of recent editions of *A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement;* thorough review of the *Handbook of Accreditation.* Individually or combined, these can introduce energizing ideas, fresh insights, and clarification of procedures and expectations.

Approach #3: Detailed Visit Preparations

Without a doubt, the evaluation visit will reflect the extent to which the institution has been proactive in its planning and in communications both internally and with NCA during the focus evaluation process. But the planning foundation is incomplete without implementing sound strategies related to the visit itself.

Documentation to support claims made in the report for the focused visit or the request for institutional change reveal the extent and quality of planning. Therefore, the contents and organization of the reference library available in the team room on-campus should be a "work in progress" throughout the focused evaluation process. Faculty and staff should be acquainted with the items included and their relevance to the focus topics. Indexing the items of the reference library to the report/request or providing a reference library inventory list with the report/request gives team members a preview of the documentation that will be readily available to them during the visit.

The institutional improvement theme and commitment should be highlighted by the president in opening remarks during the initial meeting of team members and key representatives of the institution. Citing the institution's understanding of the visit's purpose and providing the institutional context for the areas of concern or the requested institutional change may seem repetitive and can easily be overlooked. Such an omission, however, can result in misdirected and unnecessary effort on the part of the team and a potentially negative outcome of the visit for the institution.

Conclusion

The focused visit, by definition of its purposes, is intended to center on specific aspects of the institution; but the institution must avoid similarly focusing its planning and communications during the preparation process. How the focus concerns are addressed or how the proposal for change is delineated must be connected to the entire institutional context. That context must frame each process activity: analyzing the issues; cultivating faculty and staff awareness; communicating with NCA staff; choosing appropriate patterns of evidence and documentation; writing the report/request; and meeting with the team.

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Preparing for and Conducting an Effective Focused Visit*

Colleen D. Thompson
Carroll L. Bennett

The logistics of an NCA focused visit involve a variety of important steps. Although a focused visit is similar to a comprehensive, there are a number of unique differences. This paper will focus on the preparation from the standpoint of the institution as well as the team. It is based on a successful focused visit to Ridgewater College in Willmar and Hutchinson, Minnesota, on April 29-30, 1997.

A visit is enhanced when the team chair, the Self-Study Coordinator, and the NCA staff liaison work closely together to plan the visit. The *NCA Handbook of Accreditation* contains an excellent checklist that is helpful in preparing for the visit. This paper builds on this list by (1) providing useful tips on how to organize the visit, (2) presenting examples of letters and documents, and (3) including the perspective of a team chair, as well as that of the self study coordinator.

The Commission action that prompted this focused visit is found in the Statement of Affiliation Status for Ridgewater College under "Other visits required: ... A visit focused on finances, governance systems, administrative organization with respect to position descriptions and qualifications, and the institutional climate created by merging the cultures of Willmar Community College and Hutchinson-Willmar Regional Technical College." The last comprehensive NCA team visit occurred in 1994-95.

How a Focused Visit Differs from a Comprehensive Visit

One of the first steps was to analyze the differences between the comprehensive visit and the focused visit. It was important to realize that the purposes and processes had important similarities, but major differences. An understanding of these differences had a significant impact on the planning and execution of the self-study process.

The focused visit differs from a comprehensive visit in these ways:

- The self-study document is shorter and follows a slightly different format. It includes an introduction and examination of the area of focus. "The length will vary but should be adequate to cover every essential element."
- The scope is very narrow and focused on one or a small number of issues.
- The visit is shorter, usually two days instead of three.
- The accountability is greater, since it focuses on a very limited scope where progress and/or change must be verified.
- Fewer college staff probably will be involved.
- The detail is greater.

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* This paper addresses preparation for a Commission-mandated focused visit that also included an institutional change.

- The status of compliance is easier to determine since it is measurable and focused.
- The team members will often have specific expertise in the area of concern.
- The team recommendations will be based on progress of resolution of the area of concern, although there is potential for a wider scope of recommendation.

Preparing for the Focused Visit

The preparation for the visit started approximately ten months before the scheduled date. It was an asset to have the support and encouragement of the NCA staff liaison. She provided numerous insights and suggestions about the scope of the visit and some alternate ways of conducting the self-study. The format for the team report differs slightly from a comprehensive visit report.

The team charge for a focused visit is:

1. "To assess whether the institution has made progress in the areas specified," and
2. "To report significant development since the last evaluation visit."

These suggestions are based on our experience during the preparation stage.

- Carefully read the section in the NCA *Handbook of Accreditation* that discusses focused visits.
- Carefully define the concern by interpreting the meaning and expectations of the team by reading the comprehensive team report thoroughly, especially the narrative, to determine the team's basis for making the recommendation.
- Consult with the comprehensive visit team chair to clarify any issues or questions related to intent.
- Discuss the area(s) of focus with the NCA staff liaison to get his/her opinions about the issues and how each can be addressed most effectively.
- Develop a clean, concise statement of the concern(s) and related issues, which will define the scope of the self-study.
- State the major issues as a null hypothesis—and prove or disprove each by using patterns of evidence and logic.
- Carefully select the self-study chair(s) and steering committee members. Each should be knowledgeable about the area of concern, or represent a related area of the college.
- Establish timetables that are realistic and have buy-in by the key people in the institution.
- Carefully document all the changes and actions the college has taken to resolve the issue since the team's visit.
- Accept the fact that the concern that resulted in the visit may not have been totally resolved. Be comfortable with documenting what has been done coupled with a plan to continue to resolve the issue.
- Use an outside consultant, if appropriate, when the issue requires expertise that is not present within the institution or the issue is especially politically sensitive.
- Keep an emphasis on "institutional improvement" as opposed to satisfying the next NCA team that the issue has been resolved. Note how the college has improved as a result of conducting the self-study.
- Do not argue or disagree with the findings and recommendations of the previous team. The assumption should be that it was correct, since it has been through an extensive review process following the visit.

Working with the Team Chair

A strong and mutually supportive relationship with the team chair is a major factor in a successful team visit. It is important to assume that the chair and the institution have the same objective for the visit: to determine if the

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institution has demonstrated it has addressed the concerns that led to the focused visit. Accordingly, it is appropriate to plan cooperatively for the visit and determine how the team can best have the resources it needs to understand the institution's documentation.

Here are some of the steps that were followed in carrying out this relationship.

- Carefully review the credentials and experience of the Consultant-Evaluators who are proposed by NCA to conduct the visit. Request substitutions of NCA Consultant-Evaluators to the NCA liaison if you have serious concerns about their potential to provide meaningful consultant assistance on the issue.
- Contact the team chair at an appropriate time to begin a discussion of how the visit will be structured and conducted.
- Work thoughtfully with the team chair by sharing plans and coordinating efforts to provide maximum information to the team.
- Be sensitive to the needs of the team concerning information that can be sent in advance, to supplement the self-study document.
- Identify key individuals and groups with whom the team can meet and assist the team by arranging appointments.
- Be totally open with the team chair about obvious challenges, issues that were not resolved, any political issues that are influencing the process and any major events, which could occur at the time of the team visit.
- Keep the relationships with the team chair on a peer level. Remember that the team is attempting to assist the institution through its expertise and judgments.
- Review the proposed content of the team room with the chair to be sure everything that is needed will be available.

Involving Faculty and Staff In the Focused Self-Study and Team Visit

The involvement of faculty and staff in a focused visit may be slightly different from a comprehensive visit. It is important that those who are provided with an opportunity for involvement in the self-study process understand fully how they can contribute. It is also vital to keep the general college constituency informed about the progress of the study. Finally, the preparation phase just before the visit should be carried out so all are comfortable about the visit, well informed about the outcomes of the self-study, and at ease with having the team on campus.

Here are some considerations for this phase of the process.

- Remember that a focused visit is a greater challenge since there is usually a smaller internal constituency that has an interest in the topic and outcome.
- The level of concern, however, may be higher for staff if the issues are in an area for which they have specific responsibilities. Some may see it as reflecting negatively on their performance and effectiveness.
- There may be a tendency to treat the focused visit as less important, since faculty and staff do not grasp its potential for accountability by the institution.
- Information dissemination about progress during the self-study process should be similar to what was done during the preparation for the comprehensive self-study.
- Many institutions prepare a brochure (flyer) for distribution before the team visits. It typically includes a statement of the major issues, findings and internal actions, and recommendations. Often biographical information about team members is also included.
- Make sure all key administrators, staff, and faculty are on campus and available to the team during the visit.
- Be sensitive to any internal political issues and make it easy for the team to meet with people who have strong views on the issues.
- Be sure all members of the college, including students, are aware of the importance of providing information to the team and projecting a positive image of the college.

Summary

The outcome of the focused visit to Ridgewater College was considered positive for the institution. The College was better because of the self-study process and team visit. The consultant advice provided by the team was used as a source for addressing institution issues related to the self-study. The team's recommendation was consistent with the expectations of the college.

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Chapter 14

Seeking Initial Affiliation Through Initial Accreditation

CONNECTING THE DISCONNECTS

104th Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
April 10-13, 1999 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

From Seeking Affiliation Through Initial Accreditation: A Case Study

Barbara Baxter

Mid-South Community College's preparation for regional accreditation with the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association spanned a seven year period. The process, which began with submission of the Preliminary Information Form in December of 1992 and culminated in initial accreditation granted in February of 1999, had substantial positive impact upon the institution's transformation from a vocational school to a comprehensive community college. Three areas of development that were critical to institutional quality and stability included the development of academic programs and support services, the evolution of effective institutional governance, planning and budgeting processes, and the evaluation of student academic achievement and institutional effectiveness. Strategies used by Mid-South to achieve improvements in these areas should be of use to other institutions.

Institutional Background

As one of Arkansas' vocational schools, which were permitted to convert to two-year colleges by the passage of Act 1244 in 1991, Mid-South Community College first submitted its Preliminary Information Form (PIF) in 1992. The next six years encompassed the use of various consultants to develop appropriate academic programs and planning, budgeting, and assessment strategies; commitment on the part of the President and the Board of Trustees to build a solid financial base; and arduous work by college employees to improve programs, operations, and services-resulting in initial accreditation by the Commission in March of 1999.

During the period from affiliation to initial accreditation, credit enrollment at the college increased from approximately 100 to over 1,400 students per semester. The creation of continuing education and business/industry outreach programs and the expansion of existing adult education courses has resulted in another 3,000 non-credit students per year. This phenomenal growth necessitated a swift expansion of facilities, which has been funded through a bond issue and private grants. However, the rapid enrollment growth and the operational costs of new facilities and new personnel have often challenged the financial resources of the college since Arkansas uses a biennial budgeting system based on, for Mid-South, eclipsed enrollment figures and facilities needs.

Labeled as the vocational school "least likely" to achieve a successful conversion, it was not surprising that the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education sent the first PIF back to Mid-South with numerous suggestions for improvement. In fact, more than 12 months and two further submissions were needed to warrant approval for a site visit for initial candidacy. Most questionable were the institution's lack of a degree program and of budgeting and planning processes. College personnel utilized consultants from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education and former NCA Consultant-Evaluators as well as a site visit by its NCA staff liaison to effect improvements.

The Pursuit of Initial Candidacy

Unlike its sister vocational schools that opted to convert to technical colleges, Mid-South chose to become a community college, which involved the passage of a local millage in support of the College as well as the satisfaction of more strenuous Criteria for Accreditation. The greatest challenges in preparing for initial candidacy were financial stability, administrative leadership, the development of degree programs, and the creation of planning, budgeting, and assessment processes.

To address financial stability, the President and local community leaders successfully campaigned for the passage in February 1993 of a four mil property tax to support physical expansion of the College. Special Workforce 2000 funding from the state was allocated to help the new colleges build libraries and purchase equipment, but operational funding for administration and faculty salaries was limited because of the small student enrollment in the vocational school.

The College's president was hired in the spring of 1992, and its financial officer in the fall of 1993. Two administrators, originally part of the vocational school, provided leadership for facilities management and academic/student affairs. The faculty consisted of one nursing, one developmental education, and four business instructors from the vocational school. They worked with consultants from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to develop the institution's first degree program, an Associate of Applied Science in Business/Computer Operations, which was an extension of the vocational courses already in existence at the institution. All general education courses were offered through a contract with a community college 30 miles away since Mid-South did not have state approval to provide these courses.

The President, the Academic/Student Affairs Officer, a newly hired Assistant to the President, and the existing faculty began the first self-study process in the fall of 1993. Self-study committees were organized around the Criteria for Accreditation, and consultants were utilized to help College personnel better understand the philosophy of higher education and assessment issues and to develop an Associate of Arts degree–a necessary addition for the institution to achieve "community college" status.

An experienced academic officer was hired in March of 1994, followed by the employment of a Vice President for Student Affairs in June. Due to financial constraints, the college was able to hire only two general education faculty, who began work in August. However, with this new leadership in place, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) approved implementation of the AA degree with fall semester of 1994. Besides the AA and the AAS in Business/Computer Applications, the college offered a Practical Nursing diploma and seven vocational certificates. Much work was still needed, however, to revise the vocational programs to meet the academic standards expected of higher education.

At the time of the first team visit, institutional planning, budgeting, and assessment plans existed only on paper. Operational expenditures were identified by the President or the Vice President of Financial Affairs with little to no input from employees. Planning was primarily reactive as opposed to proactive as the President focused on the critical needs of day-to-day survival. The Administrative Assistant to the President drafted an institutional plan and a plan for assessing student academic achievement based on models presented at the NCA Annual Meeting the previous spring, but there was no input or review by other employees.

All college personnel worked through the summer to complete the first self-study document in preparation for a team visit in October of 1994. Due to anxiety about the success of the upcoming visit, the Self-Study Committees and the editor of the Self-Study Report tended to gloss over the challenges facing the college and focus primarily on its bright future and potential for growth. The final document portrayed an ambitious picture for a College as immature as Mid-South was at that time. In retrospect, the College would have been much better served if this first self-study effort had directly confronted the institution's weaknesses and the developmental challenges it had to overcome during the candidacy period.

The First Evaluation Team Visit

Because very few College employees had any previous experience with accreditation, the senior administration contracted with three consultants to provide a "mock evaluation visit" in September to help them understand and prepare for the NCA visit a month later. A draft of the self-study document was sent to each consultant in advance of the visit, and materials for the Resource Room were assembled and displayed for the "mock team's" evaluation. The team spent two days on the campus meeting with the administration, key committees, the Faculty Senate, and students–responding to the self-study document and other materials gathered for the visit and anticipating questions that the real team would ask so that College employees would understand the scope of the real visit.

The "mock team" prepared a report of their visit, which was provided to members of the real NCA team and to the College's NCA liaison, together with an "up-date" of further improvements made by the college in response to these findings. College personnel feel certain that the "mock visit" contributed to the success of the candidacy visit, because it enabled the college to identify some critical elements that had not been adequately addressed in the self-study document and at least plan, if not accomplish, solutions by the time of the actual visit.

The challenges facing the institution were further affected by a significant increase in enrollment for the fall of 1994 when the AA degree was first implemented. Enrollment, which had averaged about 100 students per semester, suddenly jumped to almost 500–immediately straining the operational budget and exacerbating the need for more full-time faculty and staff. Although the NCA team judged the GIRs to be sufficiently satisfied to recommend candidacy status for Mid-South, they identified eleven concerns that the college needed to address:

- The College's mission and purposes were not clearly defined nor measurable.
- Shared governance was not understood nor utilized.
- Student and financial records were inadequately managed.
- Processes for budgeting and managing financial resources were inadequate.
- Neither the strategic plan nor assessment plan met NCA expectations.
- Some course syllabi did not reflect college-level expectations.
- Some courses lacked the academic rigor and content expected of the credit value assigned.
- The AAS in Business/Computer Applications lacked a clear vocational outcome.
- The College had no process for adding or deleting programs and courses based upon valid needs analyses and faculty/advisory committee input.
- Student records were not maintained in a safe, secure manner.

In addition, the team made eleven suggestions related to the need for more faculty and staff; for financial support for professional development; the development of Student Services; and for addressing federal mandates for ADA, Student Right to Know, Campus Security, and OSHA requirements. At this time, the College also needed to address its need for science laboratories, an adequate library, and additional classroom and administrative space. Financial support for these additional facilities was secured through a bond issue against millage revenues obtained from the local property tax passed to support the College.

The Pursuit of Accreditation

Using the concerns and suggestions of the first team visit as a blueprint for growth, the College administration and faculty established priorities for improvement over the next two to four years. These priorities were improved management of student and financial records, shared governance, and academic integrity.

Improved management of student and financial records was the simplest to address. By reallocating resources, the College employed an experienced registrar and purchased a new database system. Although the new system did not support full integration of financial aid, registration, and student accounts, it was a vast improvement over the manual processes previously in use.

Developing a better understanding and implementation of shared governance was more difficult. To underscore the importance of this element, the President appointed a Director of Planning and Accreditation, who reported directly to him, and a College Planning and Advancement Committee with representation from all constituencies, and contracted with external consultants to lead College personnel in two planning workshops.

In preparation for the first planning workshop, the College distributed a "Mission and Purposes" survey to all constituencies in the early spring of 1995 to ensure that planning efforts would reflect community needs. The College's Mission Statement and Purposes were revised as a result of survey responses, and became the basis for a three-year strategic plan composed of measurable objectives developed through the first workshop and refined by the College Advancement and Planning Committee. These objectives helped address the NCA concern that achievement of the College's purposes was not measurable.

Each year, College constituencies meet to develop annual operational plans in support of the strategic goals, and the Director of Planning and Accreditation works with divisions and departments to delineate measurable objectives, as well as specific activities, responsible parties, and completion dates for their accomplishment. The process has been evolutionary in that improvements have occurred each year. As of the fall of 1998, the process extended to the individual level, with all employees developing individual "growth and development" plans in response to annual planning objectives. In addition, standing committees electronically file their meeting agenda and minutes on the administrative computer system and forward their recommendations to the President's staff through a written recommendation form. Recommendation records and administrative responses are maintained by the Director of Planning and Accreditation.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the College was the improvement of academic programs. Despite the rhetoric of the first self-study document, the team quickly discerned that the faculty had little understanding of curriculum development, the standards of higher education, or the assessment of student academic achievement. Progress in these areas was impeded by the difficulty in providing release time when enrollment increases were straining limited faculty resources and by discontinuity as faculty from the vocational school left and new faculty members were employed.

The President and the Vice President of Academic Affairs provided strong financial support for professional development and the use of external consultants to help faculty revise programs and courses and to identify assessment objectives, instruments, and processes. Over the two years between the first and second NCA visits, most of the vocational certificate programs were eliminated, the AAS in Business/Computer Applications was revised and renamed, and a new AAS in Information Systems Technology and Technical Certificate programs were added. The Vice President of Academic Affairs worked with full-time faculty to develop a formal process for the development and review of curriculum; advisory committees for all technical programs were identified; and three consultants were employed to help develop a program to assess student learning. However, by the time of the second NCA visit, the assessment program was little more than a plan. Most academic programs were too new and full-time faculty too few for more than sporadic course-level assessment to have occurred.

To help the College address its staffing and programmatic challenges, the President sought to improve its financial resources by working with state legislators and ADHE personnel to obtain increased operational and capital expenditure funds and with the MSCC Foundation board to secure individual and corporate donations on behalf of the College. Despite his success, operational funds continued to be outstripped by enrollment growth because of the biennial budget system in Arkansas. So, College personnel also began to aggressively pursue state and federal grants in addition to continuing the self-study initiative in preparation for the 1996 visit.

The NCA Visit for Continued Candidacy

Because the College had employed a significant number of new employees since the first NCA visit, the President once again utilized consultants for a "mock visit" about one month before the actual visit. Two consultants, both NCA Consultant-Evaluators who were also a president and an academic officer, focused on the governance and academic concerns identified by the 1994 team and met with key committees to help them prepare for the visit.

The strengths identified by the 1996 Consultant-Evaluators reflected the progress made by the institution over the previous two years. These included the increase in financial support; the creation of a student success center that provided tutoring and academic advising; the construction of a new administrative/classroom building; the progress made in planning and shared governance; and the expansion of continuing education, adult education, and business/industry education programs.

Also reflective of the College's progress were the concerns listed by this second team:

- a recent Department of Education review of the Title IV Federal Student Financial Assistance, which found EDPMS Cash on Hand inaccurate for the 1994-95 reporting year;
- the need to provide program-specific tuition for the truck-driving and practical nursing programs in the catalog;
- reduction of the responsibilities assigned to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, which included administrative computing, registration, and admissions;
- clearer definition of the role, purpose, and goals of the institutional research function;
- physical facilities for an adequate library, science and nursing labs, and faculty offices;
- the development and documentation of patterns of evidence that attest to the effectiveness of all College functions.

Although each of the six concerns was valid, none was as seminal as those outlined in 1994. The College had obviously addressed most core issues. Financial resources and a master plan were in place to address the need for additional facilities with construction scheduled to begin in the spring of 1997, and improved financial accounting practices had already addressed problems identified by the Department of Education Review. The single greatest challenge remaining was the last concern, which encompassed the implementation of the assessment and institutional effectiveness plans that would provide feedback and inform improvements of academic programs and other core College operations.

Suggestions made by the 1996 NCA evaluation team included consolidation of standing and self-study committees, a full-time director for the MSCC Foundation, increased emphasis on student learning as opposed to instruction in course syllabi, more attention to the centrality of general education to the College's purposes, documentation to attest to the effectiveness of the assessment plan, and employment of more full-time faculty.

The Pursuit of Initial Accreditation

Undoubtedly, the provision of additional facilities and further evolution of academic programs were critical factors in the pursuit of accreditation. Faculty offices, science and nursing labs, and additional classroom space were provided through the renovation of a former shop building in the spring of 1998. And construction was begun on a new 64,000 square foot building, funded in part by a grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, which will house a new library, learning center, bookstore, food court, and student support offices when completed in the fall of 2000. Moreover, the Board of Trustees approved a second bond issue in the fall of 1998 that assured the construction of additional facilities in the future.

Funding for improved academic support services was obtained through a Department of Education TRIO Student Support Services grant awarded in the fall of 1997. Combined with some Carl Perkins Grant funds, the TRIO program provided additional tutoring and computer resources for the Learning Center as well as career and academic counseling services for students eligible for the program.

In January 1998 two academic deans were appointed to assist the Vice President of Academic Affairs, one for General Education Learning and one for Technical/Occupational Learning. The deans coordinated a comprehensive review of all credit syllabi, identifying program and general education learning goals, as well as measurable objectives for all courses offered by the College.

By the fall of 1998, the number of full-time faculty had increased to 19 with at least one full-time faculty member in each program area. The Dean of General Education Learning, who also served as Director of Assessment, engaged all full-time faculty in a planned program of professional development that targeted the assessment of student learning and alternative teaching strategies to meet the needs of a diverse student body. The weekly professional development meetings have effected positive results, the most important of which has been increased faculty conversations about student learning and cross-curricular initiatives to improve it.

In addition, the President authorized a professional development budget of $30,000 available to employees who submitted a learning and dissemination plan to a Professional Development Committee for approval based on its applicability to College goals and objectives. Basic to the approval process is how each proposal satisfies the question, "How does this improve student learning?" Priorities for professional development were identified as curriculum development, the assessment of student learning, student retention and goal achievement, and improved support services.

The institutional emphasis on student learning has also affected a reorganization of the institutional research function. The Registrar now serves as Institutional Research Officer, but the function is also supported by the Controller, the Director of Planning and Accreditation, and the Director of Assessment so that all student data, financial data, planning outcomes, and student learning outcomes can be integrated into a holistic picture of institutional effectiveness. Planning objectives and budget priorities are evaluated in terms of their effect upon student learning; and, over time, student learning data will inform improvements to budget priorities, human resource needs, professional development, and operational and curricular/instructional improvements.

Achievement of Initial Accreditation

The 1998 evaluation team recommended Mid-South for initial accreditation. The team noted that the College is "learning-centered" with a vision that is "forward thinking and clearly articulated." They also complimented the thoroughness of the institutional planning and assessment programs, which highlights the substantial progress made in these areas since 1994.

Four future challenges were delineated by the team:

- continuation of faculty leadership in curriculum development,
- continuation of faculty involvement in implementation of the student academic achievement plan,
- continuation of efforts to attract and maintain minority faculty and administrators,
- improvement to Advisory Committee meeting agenda and minutes to reflect business community involvement in academic program development.

Team suggestions for the future included the addition of intramural sports; more attention to nontraditional recruitment activities; more attention to the fine arts; consistency in Affirmative Action and ADA statements across various college publications; more reliance on internal resources as opposed to external consultants; and a pause to "celebrate, enjoy, and review its many accomplishments."

Mid-South does have reason to celebrate because it has made astounding accomplishments in a very short period of time. Originally, the institution labeled "most likely to fail," it has become one of the fastest growing colleges in Arkansas. Its real strength for the future, however, stems from the integration of the GIRs and the five Criteria for Accreditation into the core of its operations. Because the self-study process occurred simultaneously with the development of its core operations, College personnel were able to use these guidelines as benchmarks for development. In many respects, the College is a "poster child" for accreditation. The expectations outlined by the GIRs and Criteria showed us what we needed to accomplish to be a "creditable" institution, and the guidance and advice of our liaison and of the many Consultant-Evaluators who served us helped us get there.

We know the journey will never be over...for institutions that don't continuously evaluate themselves become stagnant and unresponsive...but it feels good to have achieved this milestone.

Barbara Baxter is Vice President of Academic Affairs at Mid-South Community College in West Memphis, Ark.

A Self-Study Coordinator's Responsibility: From Campus-Wide Involvement to Community Support

Nancy Rieves

History of MSCC Self-Study Process

Mid-South Community College began the process of seeking institutional accreditation with the North Central Association in 1993. The College has engaged in three self-studies and team visits since that time. Candidacy status was granted to the institution in February 1995, continued candidacy in March 1997, and a recommendation for initial accreditation was made by the NCA evaluation team at the conclusion of the November 1998 site visit.

Understanding the Self-Study Coordinator's Role

Leading the self-study process for continued candidacy or initial accreditation is a unique and challenging commitment. The Coordinator's key role is to thoroughly understand, communicate, and organize the process for acceptance by colleagues. It is important that everyone is and feels a part of the self-study process. The process will be successful only if all college constituents are involved and have a good understanding of the accreditation process. It should be conveyed early on that campus-wide participation in the institutional self-study is important and that all individuals associated with the college are important contributors to the improvements of programs and services at the college.

Establishing the Steering and Self-Study Committees

One of the first steps the coordinator will take is establish a steering committee that represents a broad sampling of the college constituents. At MSCC, this committee consisted of the chairs of each of the NCA self-study committees with each individual being selected because of his/her abilities to organize, bring expertise in a particular area, and lead others. When we began to organize the self-study committees, we made a pointed effort to utilize some of the existing committees and not establish all new ones. For example, our curriculum committee analyzed the educational purposes section of the self-study and the planning committee provided input into the mission and purposes portion of the report. However, the integrity committee and the human resource committee, for example, were established for the self-study process only and were dissolved once the self-study process was complete. Since we are a small institution (FTE = 600), we didn't want to allow past experiences of getting spread too thin and burned out on committee meetings to happen again.

The Steering Committee's key role is to keep everyone on task and focused throughout the self-study process. Committee member input is critically important in the last stages of completing the report. Once the draft was ready for review, this committee spent many hours tweaking and fine-tuning the report just prior to its going to the printer. Looking for inconsistences or contradictions from chapter to chapter as well as verifying factual accuracies took time.

Having the NCA Staff Liaison Visit Campus

The North Central staff liaison serves as the institution's resource person with the Commission and will visit institutions upon request. It is wise to take advantage of this service by having the liaison review the self-study plan, the assessment plan, the draft of the Self-Study Report, and, most importantly, visit your campus. Dr. López visited our campus six months before the NCA visit and was enthusiastic about our accomplishments since her last visit. She offered constructive advice regarding weaknesses in such areas as assessment and internal training of technological advancements. She spoke with us about the challenges of a new institution: meeting the needs of the students, retaining students, strengthening the quality of educational programs, and overcoming the "we've arrived" feeling once accredited. She also suggested that the college use the opportunity of the NCA visit to let the community and students know about MSCC's accomplishments of the last six years, what this visit means to MSCC, and the dreams for the College. Her visit helped her understand more about our institution, especially as she began the process of selecting the evaluation team.

Building Strong Internal Communications

Efforts to keep employees informed about the self-study process included e-mail updates, articles in our biweekly campus newsletter, announcements at "First-Friday" general meetings once a month, and, of course, self-study committee meetings. A regular NCA section in the campus newsletter was presented to inform employees of such details as committee recommendations, team member profiles, a summary of how the college was addressing each of the previous team's concerns, and college priorities for the next year. Keeping the college constituents informed about all the issues surrounding the NCA visit was important if everyone was to feel a part of the self-study process.

With so much focus on institutional effectiveness, special insert sections on assessment were a part of the Campus Connection Newsletter; and weekly meetings with faculty members were held to discuss student academic achievements issues. These articles and meetings helped us understand that assessment is not just for faculty but is important to all employees of MSCC.

It was important to keep the morale and excitement up as we approached the final week before the NCA visit. One way that we added excitement to the process was to put entertaining cards with appropriate candy attached in all the employees' mailboxes. For instance, one card with a Snickers bar attached said, "Don't let NCA 'Snicker' at you; be prepared for the NCA Visit." We also held an NCA "Jeopardy" Game two weeks before the visit as a way to review the priorities of the college. Each of the five categories was named according to each of the five NCA criteria. Funny skits and advertisements took place during break times as a way to make the event even more fun. Again, it is important to keep everyone focused and not lose the momentum and excitement as the scheduled visit approaches.

Involving the Community in the Visit

One of the most effective activities that took place during the NCA visit was a Community-Wide Breakfast. As first requested by our 1996 Team Chair, we invited more than 100 community leaders to a 7:30 breakfast on the second day of the team visit and not only received an overwhelming response in attendance but also an overwhelming verbal response in support of the college. The audience responded to the team chair's request for comments from the community leaders on how well MSCC served and partnered with the community. The excitement from one community leader spread throughout the room, causing school principals and teachers, industry managers, mayors, and state representatives to stand and tell of their positive experiences with the college. With many individuals in the community not realizing the wide array of services we offer, the breakfast gave the college an opportunity to advertise the variety of programs offered as well as tell our success stories. The meeting held during the continued candidacy visit was so moving that we taped the 1998 breakfast to show at the next campus-wide gathering so all employees of the college could see the tremendous impact they have on the people of our community.

Scheduling a Mock Visit

For both the continued candidacy and initial accreditation visit, a "mock" evaluation team visited our campus to help us better prepare and understand what to expect from the NCA visits. Scheduled meetings were arranged with key personnel and committees much like a real North Central team visit. Besides an open time where anyone could ask the consultants questions, the members also met with students, faculty, and advisory committee representatives. The mock teams consisted of current, retired, and Arkansas affiliated North Central Consultant-Evaluators. In preparation for the visit, the team had the opportunity to read the Self-Study Report and supporting documents. Employees had developed specific questions prior to the visit that would help them in interviews with the upcoming visit. The mock team provided us with candid, invaluable advice for all areas of the college in a relaxed setting. Their visit was followed by a written report highlighting areas on which the College could focus in the time remaining before the November NCA visit. We concluded that the mock visit had the following benefits:

- New employees received a preview of how a North Central visit was to be conducted.
- For "old hats," the consultants' questions and comments helped prepare them for the real visit.
- The consultants provided us with expert advice in preparation for the visit over the following eight weeks.
- The consultants answered questions of uncertainty for many employees.
- We had the opportunity to address areas that we were not previously addressing.

Scheduling a Pre-Visit

About one month prior to the real visit, the NCA team chair spent a full day on campus visiting primarily with the steering committee, the vice-presidents, and the deans. The team chair did have a chance to visit at length with our President to discuss such important topics as the state funding formula, the tremendous growth in enrollment, and our visions of the future. By having the team chair on our campus before the actual evaluation visit, we were able to spend time with him discussing these and other issues we believed were important to us. He then took the specific list of topics and shared them with the other team members so they could plan to share their experiences and consult further with us during the visit. Since MSCC began the NCA self-study process, we have stressed the importance of taking advantage of the consulting side of the NCA Consultant-Evaluators since experienced team members from more developed institutions can bring a wealth of information to our young institution.

Incorporating Planning with the NCA Self-Study Process

One detail that made MSCC's accreditation process successful was its ability to incorporate the self-study process into the established annual planning process. These processes were truly interrelated and participatory, making the North Central issues a part of our daily routines. With the self-study activities evaluating the college at a particular point in time and the strategic planning efforts focusing on future institutional change, we were able to use many of the same documents in developing the planning objectives and in establishing the recommendations in the self-study. These were obviously not independent processes, but two exercises linked closely together with significant advantages.

Establishing the Resource Room

Organizing the Resource Room is an integral part of the coordinator's responsibility. The room should be designed to reference documents or patterns of evidence noted in the Self-Study Report. A variety of items should be found in the Resource Room: minutes of Board meetings, audit reports, committee minutes, catalogs, promotional items, policy manuals, assessment plans and reports, planning documents, course syllabi, articulation agreements, and professional development activities. Developing a comprehensive Resource Room will cause less stress on the coordinator during the visit because there will be fewer reasons for a team member to request documents or information. However, there will always be something a team member wants that you decided not to have on hand in the room! Having all supporting materials gathered in one room would be an impossible task. Just do the best you can in providing what you anticipate the team members will want to view.

It is important to think about other needs of the team members such as personal computers, particular software, a telephone line, a printer, and secretarial support. Making the team members' work stations as convenient as possible is just another way to make the visit go smoothly.

Enjoying the Visit

Once the day finally arrives, enjoy having the visiting team members on campus. If an institution is really prepared, employees will find great relief and satisfaction when the team finally gets to town. Remember that these Consultant-

Evaluators representing peer institutions bring a great deal of experience and valuable advice as the programs and services are perfected and developed.

Summary

It is important to take a short break and reflect on the task just completed, for it is an enormous task. Once we have all paused, we will take the self-study off the shelf and continue to use it in the ongoing planning process of the institution to improve the programs and services we offer to our community.

Nancy Rieves is Director of Planning and Accreditation at Mid-South Community College in West Memphis, Ark.

The Self-Study: A Personnel Approach

Kristin Bowden
Mary Renick

Introduction

The key to preparing an evaluative self-study document lies in appointing the best person to each area of responsibility. At Cossatot Technical College, a small two-year college in southwest Arkansas, this evolved through a trial and error process spanning six years. Since CTC was under a state mandate to acquire accreditation in a limited time frame, it seemed expedient for the Self-Study Coordinator and the steering committee chair to remain constant. In preparing reports on the individual chapters, however, it seemed best to have new committee members who could present research materials with a fresh perspective. A look into the roles of each of the key personnel involved in the self-study will provide a better understanding of the actual self-study process. A brief description of these responsibilities is presented below.

Personnel	Necessary Traits/Skills	Responsibilities
Self-Study Coordinator	○ Ability to accept criticism ○ Relates easily with superiors and peers ○ Written and oral communication abilities ○ Computer knowledge (word processing) ○ Research experience ○ Access to every area of the college ○ Organizational abilities ○ Release time from other duties ○ Accepts the seriousness of this responsibility ○ Creativity	○ Maintain contact with NCA liaison ○ Keep committees on track ○ Serve as co-editor of final document ○ Serve on Steering Committee ○ Keep administration informed of progress ○ Assist committees in accessing needed information ○ With Steering Committee Chair, write Introduction and Conclusion, prepare Appendices, distribute BIDs for completion, and develop surveys as needed ○ Prepare Resource Room with Chair of Steering Committee ○ Make arrangements for visiting team ○ Coordinate itinerary of team members with Team Chair
Chair of Steering Committee	○ Assertive; leadership skills ○ Relates well with superiors and peers ○ Written and oral communication abilities ○ Organizational abilities ○ Accepts the seriousness of this responsibility ○ Creativity	○ Keep committees on track ○ Serve as co-editor for final document ○ Assist committees in accessing needed information ○ Provide leadership in writing reports ○ With Coordinator, write Introduction and Conclusion, prepare Appendices, distribute BIDs for completion, and develop surveys as needed ○ Assist with Resource Room preparation
Steering Committee Members	○ Energetic ○ Well-respected by peers ○ Written and oral communication abilities ○ Organizational abilities	○ Serve as Chair of Self-Study Committee ○ Organize individual self-study committees ○ Assign tasks to committee members ○ Establish timetable for self-study ○ Write and revise committee reports ○ Write responses to concerns from previous Self-Study and GIRs ○ Develop appropriate survey questions ○ Evaluate strengths and concerns identified by committees

Summary

The positions mentioned above are only the key players in the preparation of the self-study; many other individuals from all areas of the college must be involved. While it must be acknowledged that some will work harder than others, the opportunity to participate in this important college event must be made available to all.

A key factor in the successful self-study is the acknowledgment of its importance by supervisors across the campus. The College President must take a leadership role in promoting the self-study and its importance. This stance will make it easier for supervisors to be flexible in releasing their employees to attend committee meetings or do research and will encourage offices to release needed information to committees. Supervisors must also set an example by participating fully in the self-study process themselves.

Conducting a thorough self-study and reporting the findings is an immense task, requiring dedication, organization and hard work. It can be done, however, even with tight deadlines, if the key roles are filled by people with the desire and determination to do the job well and who possess the abilities mentioned above.

Kristin Bowden is Dean of Student Services at Cossatot Technical College in De Queen, Ark.

Mary Renick is Director of Marketing and Recruiting at Cossatot Technical College in De Queen, Ark.

Building a College Community Through Involvement in the Self-Study Process

Anne Austin
H. Jane Parker

The self-study process for initial accreditation began at the University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville (UACCB) during a period of institutional turmoil. This paper and its related presentation describe the obstacles faced by the institution and how the development of the self-study served as a mechanism to overcome barriers and rebuild a sense of community at the College. Our story illustrates how the self-study process can be accomplished in an uncertain environment and become a vehicle for positive change. UACCB was granted initial accreditation in August 1998, following a site visit in April 1998.

Obstacles Faced by the College

The past several years had been tumultuous when the self-study process for continued candidacy began in the spring of 1997. UACCB (then Gateway Technical College) faced numerous obstacles. These obstacles included:

- high rates of faculty and staff turnover
- low institutional morale
- rapid institutional change
- uncertainty about and lack of commitment to the self-study process

Despite real growth and successful attainment of initial candidacy in 1995, the institution lacked assurance, a sense of identity, and security.

A review of the College's history provides insight. As mandated by the "Two-year Postsecondary Education Reorganization Act," in 1991 the College converted from a vocational technical institute to a technical college. This change in the college's status initiated its efforts to seek NCA accreditation. In 1993 the first bid for candidacy failed, and a new President was brought to campus. Under the President's leadership both the 1995 bid for initial candidacy and the focused visit for the AA program in 1996 were successful, and a visit for continued candidacy was scheduled for fall 1997.

In the meantime, the relationship between administration and other areas of the campus began to deteriorate. This situation led to an evaluation of morale issues by a professional consultant in spring 1997. An unusual amount of turnover of faculty and staff and the general climate of low morale culminated in the resignations of the College's Dean of Academic Affairs and President in the fall of 1997.

Contemporaneously, a positive change occurred with the institution's merger with the University of Arkansas System. The merger, which had been under discussion for half a year, was widely supported by the campus. An interim Chancellor, from another campus of the University of Arkansas system, was appointed, as was an interim Academic Dean. In spite of the merger and new leadership the prevailing mood was "How long will this last?"

Due to the shift in institutional alignment and new leadership, the decision was made to postpone the NCA site visit from November 1997 to April 1998. It was, perhaps, reckless enthusiasm born of a sense of "new beginnings" that led to a campus-wide vote to apply for initial accreditation in April 1998, rather than for continued candidacy as originally planned.

Instead of abating during the self-study process, turmoil continued. Hurdles included the unexpected resignation of the Dean of Planning and Assessment, and the anxiety created by the anticipation of the self-study process itself. Throughout the development of the self-study additional energy was absorbed by a vigorous campaign to pass a county-wide sales tax. The successful vote permitted the institution's conversion from a technical to a community college, and resulted in the next rebirth of Gateway Technical College–as the University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville.

How We Pulled It Off

A conscious decision was made early on to conduct the self-study in a way that would create and encourage campus-wide ownership. The aim was to improve morale through the self-study process and to provide a mechanism that would encourage the campus to adopt the positive elements of the personnel changes and structural transformations that had taken place.

The first stage of the process was to develop a self-study committee structure that would foster "grass-roots" involvement. Under the direction of the self-study co-coordinators, committees were designed to involve every member of the college community. First, the coordinators developed a comprehensive committee structure that represented each section of the Self-Study Report. Next, at a campus-wide meeting everyone–including maintenance, faculty, staff, and administrators–selected the committee(s) on which they wished to serve.

Each committee was charged with specific tasks to strengthen the transition from the process for continued candidacy to the process for initial accreditation. Committee members were asked to rewrite/update sections of the 1995 initial candidacy Self-Study Report. This included identifying relevant data and gathering pertinent materials for the reference room, in support of each committee's section of the self-study document. The committees were asked to be both positive and critical, positive in terms of recognizing sincere efforts toward improvement, as well as the significant strides that had been made; critical in terms of recognizing substantive shortcomings and the need for continual improvement as an ongoing process.

In addition to the work of individual committee members and guidance provided by the Self-Study Coordinators, much of the organizing and communicating occurred during campus-wide meetings. At these meetings, issues that affected the self-study process were openly discussed and at times put to a campus-wide vote.

During the writing phase, drafts of the Self-Study Report were circulated to obtain multiple perspectives. An initial draft was written, then rewritten by someone else, then circulated to two to three critics, rewritten, and so on. The co-coordinators wrote several sections and edited the entire document for consistency of style and tone. This methodology allowed us to tap what institutional memory existed, and–more importantly–created collective, as opposed to individual, ownership of the self-study process and document.

We sincerely believe that the successful attainment of initial accreditation in 1998 was UACCB's reward for the willingness to "hustle" on *everyone's* part, the inclusive self-study process that resulted in shared ownership, the encouragement and knowledgeable support from administrators, and the sincere desire of the entire campus to succeed. The site visit team's only caveat was a requirement for submission in May 2000 of a more comprehensive and accomplished report on planning and assessment, which is currently in progress.

In conclusion, we would *not* recommend that other institutions emulate our institution's timetable. We *do*, however, advise other colleges to consider this methodology for developing the Self-Study Report, with its focus on shared ownership through shared involvement.

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From Candidacy to Accreditation: Becoming an Institution of Higher Education

Della Burt-Bradley

Achieving accreditation is a goal for an increasing number of institutions of varying types, purposes, and sizes. And in seeking accreditation, these institutions choose to be evaluated by characteristics of higher education and to maintain standards publicly recognized by such institutions. Of course, this does not mean that the candidate institution no longer retains its unique identity, for it still develops, for example, its own mission, purpose, and curricula. Nevertheless, a candidate institution is expected to fulfill the General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) and to make significant progress towards fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation, expecting to fulfill them by the end of the period of candidacy. In short, the candidate institution is subscribing to guidelines consistent with institutions of higher education.

One of the problematic areas is related to General Education, i.e., GIR 16 and related emerging patterns of evidence in Criteria Two and Three. One institution, a technical-vocational college, illustrates some issues in this area. Its mission is to train students for employment. Its programs are mainly composed of two parts: vocational/technical courses and applied general courses—Business English, Technical or Business Math, Physics for Architects—sometimes called general studies, sometimes called general education. Many faculty and staff believe that applied general courses should not be changed to fit general education requirements like those typical of liberal arts colleges because with its current program, the college has enjoyed a reputation for preparing well-trained employees and has an excellent placement rate. The college, however, is unaccredited and desires the benefits of accreditation.

One of the main issues it has to address is its definition, philosophy, and objectives of general education, as well as the importance of general education in higher education institutions and in the accreditation process. It may have to determine ways to change a culture to accept, develop, internalize and implement a revised general education curriculum. The NCA *Handbook of Accreditation* offers guidance. Nevertheless, it is clear that implementation is not always easy; therefore, good practices at other colleges and universities might prove helpful. Some of the schools that have successfully addressed the issue have taken several key steps. They have, for example, reexamined their mission and purposes, and, as a result, made a commitment to make necessary changes, providing the time and resources to effect them. They have established a realistic timeline for internal acclamation and for meeting time requirements in the NCA process. (The goal is to assure that the college works toward a shared goal in a timely manner.) In a collegial spirit and process, they have given primary responsibility for curricular development and revision to faculty, providing for meaningful interaction with and requisite support from administrators, especially academic administrators. They have conducted a systematic and thorough program review.

Another problematic area relates to GIRs 9 and 11, and emerging patterns of evidence in Criterion Two. Institution Y illustrates some of the issues. It offers both a liberal arts and technical curriculum, and a general education component in appropriate programs. In fact, it has historically required general education courses and believes in a philosophy of general education. Some faculty have the requisite credentials to teach in their respective areas; some do not, but they have taught certain general education courses for several years despite their lack of credentials. A few faculty from a neighboring accredited comprehensive community college teach some general education courses for the college. Thus, students have access to a general education curriculum and seem not to be adversely affected by this delivery system when they transfer or seek employment.

The issue, however, for initial and subsequent accreditation is the institution's control of its curriculum and the credentials of its faculty. Again, good practices at other colleges are instructive. Successful institutions, in addressing the curriculum issue, have established a process not only to have a course offered for its students by another college but also to assure appropriate monitoring of its content, rigor, and breadth. *In addressing the faculty credentials issue,* they have established a specific policy outlining requirements for faculty credentials, making sure that they are consistent, for example, with state requirements and NCA guidelines. Secondly, they have established timelines for existing faculty to comply with the policy. Third, they have communicated policies and procedures to employees individually and collectively in an appropriate and timely manner. Fourth, they have provided opportunities for faculty to achieve the desired goals. In rare cases, they have assisted with plans for retirement.

In general, successful institutions have also read thoroughly the *Handbook for Accreditation* and have not hesitated to collaborate with similar institutions and with their NCA staff liaison.

No doubt, each college must sometimes confront problems in ways unique to that institution; and, of course, institutions are different. That is the vibrancy and resilience of our higher education system. What helps to strengthen this system and to make a case to our constituencies, however, are our shared educational values, our ability to maintain standards of excellence and communicate them among ourselves and to others. Successfully addressing issues related to general education and faculty who teach such courses contributes to such growth, at the same time confirming what it means to be a higher education institution.

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